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# DISCOURSE ON MIRACLES,

699.d.1  
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Considered as EVIDENCES to prove the Divine  
Original of a REVELATION.

Wherein is shewn,

What Kind and Degree of EVIDENCE arises from  
them, and in which the various Reasonings on those  
Questions that relate to the Subject are fairly re-  
presented.

To which is added, an

## APPENDIX, CONTAINING

An ENQUIRY into this Question, *viz.* Whether the Doctrines  
of a future State of Existence to Men, and a future Retri-  
bution, were plainly and clearly taught by *Moses* and the  
Prophets? Humbly offered to the Consideration of the  
Rev. Dr. WARBERTON, and all others that particularly in-  
terest themselves in this Question.

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By THOMAS CHUBB.

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MIRACLES



T H E

# P R E F A C E.

**C**ONTROVERSIES in matters of *religion*, when managed with that *fairness* and *good humour* as they ought, have this advantage arising from them, that they give occasion for mens reasoning faculties to be exercised with much more *care* and *attention* than otherwise they would be. And this tends to *check* and *restrain* the growth of

A 2                      bigotry

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bigotry and superstition, which, thro' mens *inattention*, are apt to prevail in the world. The points controverted, are, likewise, very often set in a much *clearer* light by this means, and the way to truth is rendered more *easy*, by a removal of those *difficulties* and *objections* which are bars to mens receiving it. And this has given occasion to some men, (*viz.* those who pursue truth in the *love* of it) to wish that all *restraints* upon mens enquiries were removed, and that all men were at *full liberty* to offer their thoughts, and their objections *freely*, upon every question with which religion is concerned; this being most *fair* and *equitable* in itself, and, likewise, the most sure and certain way for a religion which is *well grounded* to be *generally received*, and, thereby, to be more *thoroughly established*. Indeed, this is an improper way for the general reception,

## The P R E F A C E. v

ception, and, thereby, the establishment of a religion that is not well grounded, because such a method *tends* to its subversion. And,

This has encouraged me to offer, to publick consideration, the following Discourse on Miracles, considered as *evidences*, to prove the *divine original* of a revelation, wherein I have taken a view of the subject considered simply in itself, without any view or regard to any particular revelation, or to any particular miracle, wrought, or supposed to be wrought in *favour* of the divinity of any revelation; and, in which, I have introduced the *various reasonings* upon the several questions with which the subject is concerned, not intending, hereby, to *raise difficulties*, and *make objections*, these being raised and made already, but only to give a *fair representation* of what may be said  
upon

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upon *both sides* of those questions, without making myself a *party*, or being *interested* in what is offered on either side, that so, if any *difficulty* should arise, from such a view of the case, it might give occasion, and opportunity to some person or other of superior abilities to remove it. I am sensible it is a case but too common, when men exercise any *freedom* in reasoning about matters of religion, or when they *lay open* the difficulties which any scheme of religion is incumbered with, and the like, then they are represented to the world as *Deists*, as *enemies* to revealed religion, &c. tho', by the way, Christians are but a sect of Deists or Theists, as those are justly opposed to Atheists, and Polytheists. Yea, some Christians seem scarcely to have come up to the character of Deists, or Theists; because *Polythe-*

*ism*, or a plurality of deities, seem to be a *part* of the composition in their scheme of religion. However, this is what I am not solicitous about; for as I am very sensible that I am answerable to *God* for my actions, so to his *judgment*, as to the most fair and equitable Being, I chuse to *refer* myself. The present cry is, that *Deism* and *Infidelity* prevails; and if these complaints are *just*, then the question is, what should be done to *stop* the growth of it? And the answer, I think, is evident (so far as reason and argument is concerned in the case) *viz.* that *fair* and *proper answers* should be returned to those *difficulties* and *objections* which are made the *grounds* of it. But how can such answers be returned, except those difficulties and objections are *fairly* and *fully* represented? And this is what I have endeavoured



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voured to do in the following Discourse, so far as the subject I treat of in a general way is concerned.

*this is what I am not telling about; for as I am very sensible that I am answerable to God for my actions, so to his judgment, to the most just and equitable Judge, I chuse to refer myself.*

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*are they prevail; and if these considerations are just, then the question is, what should be done to stop the growth of it? And the answer, I think, is evident (so far as reason and argument is concerned in*

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*the case) viz. that fair and proper reasons should be returned to those objections and objections which are made the grounds of it. But how such answers be returned, except by those difficulties and objections, and fairly represented? And this is what I have endeavoured*

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When considered as Evidences to prove the  
Divine Original of a Revelation.

I SHALL not here enter into those questions, whether God has ever given a *divine revelation* to the world; or whether ever any *miracles* have been wrought in favour of the divinity of a revelation; but admitting the supposition that a divine revelation has been, or may be given to mankind; and that miracles have been, or may be wrought in favour of the divinity of a revelation;

lation; then my enquiry is, what *kind*, and *degree* of *evidence* arises from them. And in order to treat of this subject clearly, I shall *first* enquire what is meant by a *miracle*, as it stands related to the present question; *secondly*, what by *revelation*; *thirdly*, what by the *divinity* of a revelation; *fourthly*, what by *evidence*; and *fifthly*, what by *proof*. And,

First, Of a *miracle*. This term, I think, is used to express a *sensible effect*, which is *above* the natural ability or inherent power of man to cause or produce; which is likewise *above* or *besides* the ordinary course of nature, or of those laws by which the natural world is governed, in the course of God's general providence; and which also is produced by the agency, or cooperation of an *invisible Being*. By the natural ability of man, is meant that ability which arises from our *whole* composition with *all* its improvements, acting *in*, or *upon* matter, considered as under the direction of those laws which the God of nature hath subjected it to. As thus, supposing it to be *above* the natural ability of man, (when thoroughly acquainted with all the secrets and powers in nature, and master of all the art which human nature is capable of attaining,) to *raise himself up*, and *move through the air*, to the height, and with the swiftness of an eagle; and that this effect must be the produce, not of the ordinary course of nature, or of those laws by which the natural world is governed, but of the *immediate* interposi-

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tion and power of some *invisible* agent; and supposing it to be *above* the natural ability of this man to *discover* that he should be thus raised up, and moved by the power of another; admitting this to be the case; then if a man should be thus raised up, and moved through the air, as aforesaid, and if this operation so far depended upon the man's *will*, as that he *would*, or would *not* be thus moved through the air, according as he willed either; or if he only *foretold* that this effect would take place; this would be, with respect to that man, *miraculous*, or a miracle; and he upon whose *will* the operation depended, or who *foreknew*, and *foretold* it, that *man* might be said to work this miracle. Again, suppose a man should *will* that a particular mountain should be *removed from its place* and be *carried into the midst of the sea*; or, suppose he should only *foreknow*, and *foretel* that such an effect would take place, admitting it to be *above* his ability to cause or produce such an effect, or to foreknow that it would be effected, and that it was not the produce of those laws by which the natural world is governed, and suppose the mountain should be removed accordingly, this would be, with respect to that man, a *miracle*; and he upon whose *will* the operation depended, or who *foreknew* and *foretold* it, that *man* would be the worker of the miracle. For tho' this operation was performed, not by the power of the man, but by the power of some *invi-*

*fi*ble agent; yet as the power which was exercised, in this case, was *subject* to the man's will, as to the exercise of it; or else, as it was *revealed* to, and *foretold* by him, that such an effect should take place; so *his* relation to the action, as aforesaid, would render it his, in an improper sense, and *he* would be the *worker* of the miracle. And this is supposed to be the case in all those miracles with which the present question is concerned. For, as miracles are here considered as *evidences* of the *divinity* of a revelation; and as divine revelations are delivered to the world by the *mouth*, or *pen* of some man; so no miracle can be an *evidence* of the *divinity* of a man's message, except the power exercised in working the miracle be *subject* to the man's will, as to the exercise of it; or, at least, except it be *revealed* to, and *foretold* by that man, that such an effect will take place; for, otherwise, it would not appear that the miracle was related to one man, or to his message, more than to another; and, consequently, not to any man; and, therefore, it could not be an evidence in the present case.

There are *two* other definitions of a miracle, which do not answer throughout to the definition here given; tho' when the cases are examined, they will appear in the issue to be resolved into it. As *first*, some men define a miracle to be a sensible effect, which is *wonderful* and *surprizing* to the spectators. But then it is to be remembered, that those effects  
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being wonderful and surprizing, are the *ground* or *reason* to such persons to judge them to be produced, *not* by the agency of man, but by the agency, or cooperation of an *invisible* Being, and *as such* they are considered as miraculous. So that this definition, in its *last* result, is the same with that given above. Secondly, some men define a miracle to be a sensible effect, which is above the natural ability of man to cause or produce; and which is produced by the agency, or cooperation of *God*. But then those men take it for granted, that there is *no other* invisible agent *but God*, which *can*, or which *does*, at least, perform any operation upon this globe. So that this definition is the same with that before laid down, excepting that it ascribes, and confines all such effects as are above the natural ability of man to cause or produce, to the agency or operation of *God only*. Again,

Secondly, Of a *revelation*. This term expresses the *conveying* of ideas from one intelligent being to another, whether it be by speech, writing, or otherways; and whether the subject of such ideas be matter of *speculation*, or *practice*; and whether it relates to facts *past*, *present*, or to *come*. But lest the terms I here make use of to explain the term revelation should need themselves to be explained, therefore, to cut short this work, I observe, that the point I have now in hand is a *specimen*, and carries in it the *idea* of what I intend by the term under consideration,

tion. That is, I do put this discourse into *writing*, thereby to convey to my reader the *idea* of what I intend by the term *revelation*; and if that *idea* is convey'd hereby, then this is, in reality, revelation itself; because it not only contains in it, but likewise conveys to my reader, the *idea* which I annex to that term. Again,

Thirdly, Of the *divinity* of a *revelation*. When the term *divine* is annexed to a *revelation*, it expresses, that the *ideas* which it contain were *originally* and *immediately* convey'd from God to his creature, or creatures; tho' *secondarily* and *mediately* they are conveyed from him, by one creature to another. But then by *divine revelation*, in the present case, is not intended any *particular, private revelation*, the subject of which relates to particular persons, or to a particular occasion; but only such publick revelations as are given, and intended to inform the judgments, and to direct the affections and behaviour of mankind, and, as such, to be a standing rule of action to them. Again, by publick revelations, are not meant a *divine application* to the mind of *each individual* of our species, by which are *revealed* to each individual the truths intended to be made known. For tho' this may be called a *publick revelation*, as it is given universally to all, yet, strictly speaking, it would be a *particular, private revelation*, because it is given particularly to each individual. And such a revelation, whether



it be considered as publick or private, is foreign to the present enquiry; because the case of miracles, in our *present view* of them, would not come into the question. For, in that case, as every one would have the revelation at *first hand*, and no one would receive it from another, so no credit would be required, by one, from another, with respect to it; and, consequently, no miracle would be wanted to *back* or *support* any one's credit on that account. Besides, the present enquiry is not, what sort of evidence is proper to work a *rational* conviction in the mind of each individual of our species, of the divinity of those impressions which have been made upon them, and by which a divine revelation is supposed to be conveyed to each of them; but only upon a supposition that a revelation of which it is said that it is divine should at any time be given or published by the mouth, or pen of *one* man, to others, and for *their* use, and real miracles should be wrought by the *reporter*, and should be appealed to by him as *evidences* of the *divinity* of his mission; then, and in that case, the enquiry is, what *kind*, or *degree* of evidence arises, (*not* to the revealer, but to *others*,) from those miracles, in favour of the divinity of that revelation. Again,

Fourthly, Of *evidence*. This term expresses that which is the *ground* of our *assent* to, or *dissent* from a proposition; and it is of *two* kinds, namely, testimony, and deduction.  
By

By *testimony* is meant, when an intelligent being, by speech, writing, or otherwise, *vouches for*, or *denies* the proposition in debate. And by *deduction* is meant, when that which is brought as evidence requires our *comparing* of ideas, and from thence we *collect* or *deduce* the truth, or falseness of the point in question. And as evidence is of *two* kinds, so it is the *latter* of these with which we are at present concerned. For as miracles are sensible effects, so they become evidences, *not* by bearing testimony, as aforesaid, but by being *reflected* upon with regard to their physical causes, and the grounds and reasons upon which the agent acts, and the like; from whence is collected or deduced the *truth*, or *falseness* of the proposition in question; and that becomes the *ground* of our *assent*, or *dissent*. Miracles are *direct* evidences, and give a *sensible* proof, not of the veracity, but only of the *power* which attends the actor; and, therefore, any other kind of evidence which may be supposed to arise from them, can be only by *deduction*, as it is the result of *just* reasoning upon the case. Again,

Fifthly, Of *proof*. This term expresses either the *correspondency* of the evidence to, and with the truth of things; or else the *prevalency* of the evidence upon the judgment. By the correspondency of the evidence to, and with the truth of things, is meant, when the evidence sets forth or witnesseth to the *truth*. And this is proof in the *most*  
proper

*proper* sense; tho' it must be granted, it will *not* be esteemed so but where *conviction* follows. The person who is not convinced by the evidence proposed, will judge that the proposition is not proved by it; because, he thinks, the truth *does*, or *may* lay on the other side of the question. By the prevalence of the evidence upon the judgment, is meant, that it *so far* prevails, as that the judgment is *convinced* of the truth, or falseness of the proposition upon that evidence. And this is called proof in a *secondary* and *less proper* sense; even tho' the judgment determines *wrong* upon such evidence. And in that case, it is so only in a secondary and less proper sense; because, strictly speaking, a false proposition cannot be proved true, tho' the understanding may be so far misled as to judge it to be so. Proof, likewise, is of two kinds, namely, probable and certain. By probable is meant, when the evidence shews that it is *more likely* for the truth to be on one side of the question than on the other, but does not shew it *absolutely* to be so; that is, it does not shew that it implies a contradiction, or an impossibility in the nature of things to suppose the contrary. Again, by probable is meant, when the evidence prevails so far upon the judgment as to gain *assent*, but not so far as to *exclude* a possibility of the contrary. By certain proof is meant, when the evidence shews the truth to be on one side of the question *absolutely*, and that

it cannot be otherwise; or when the evidence so far prevails upon the judgment, as that it *determines absolutely*, and is convinced that it implies a contradiction, or an impossibility in the nature of things to suppose the contrary, tho' it may, possibly, be otherwise. And this latter case is called *certain proof*, not because it is so in itself, but because it is so esteemed by the person who is convinced by it.

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## SECTION II.

**H**AVING explained the terms which immediately relate to the subject under consideration, I should now proceed to the general enquiry, were it not that there are *five* things which seem absolutely necessary to be enquired into, as *previous* to it. And these points seem proper to be taken notice of, not only for the *better*, and *more* perfect understanding of the case before us, but also, in order to keep, as *clear* as possible, from every difficulty that is liable to perplex it; which enquiries are as follow. *First*, How far the natural ability of man extends. *Secondly*, Whether there are any other invisible agents but God, which can, or which do (at least) act upon this globe. *Thirdly*, Supposing there are, then what kind or degree of power



power they are capable of exercising. *Fourthly*, Whether God will suffer them to exert such power as they have, when it is to be employed for the delusion of his creatures. And *Fifthly*, Whether a man who may be said to work a miracle, (as before explained,) is at liberty to use such miracle-working power, well or ill, and to employ it in serving what purposes he please. And,

First, I am to enquire how far the natural ability of man extends. But this seems to be a difficulty *too great* for human understanding to surmount. We plainly see the *great difference* there is with regard to the capacities of men, and the improvement of those capacities, in the knowledge of those laws, to which matter is subjected betwixt one man and another; a difference *so great*, that, to appearance, *one* man is as much superior to *another* in these respects, as the *latter* is superior to some *brutes*. And as our own abilities come *short*, in one respect or other, to the abilities of other men, so this shews the *difficulty*, or rather the *impossibility* of fixing the point, and shewing the utmost extent of the natural ability of mankind. But then, tho' this is a point which cannot possibly be *fixed* by us, yet there are cases in which there is *just ground* for *presuming* that the effects produced *exceed* the bounds of human power; because in those cases there is a *high* degree of probability on the one side, and but a *bare* possibility on the other. Thus, as in the two

instances mentioned above, *viz.* if a man should rise up, and move thro' the air, to the height, and with the swiftness of an eagle; or, if he should command a mountain to remove out of its place, and to stand in the midst of the sea, and it should be removed accordingly, then there would be *just ground* for *presuming* that those effects *exceeded* the bounds of human power; because, as this is *greatly* superior to any power which has yet appeared to be in man, so from hence arises a *high* degree of probability, that it is *above* the natural ability of mankind; and there is *no* probability, but only a *bare* possibility, if that, of the contrary. And, therefore, admitting that in *such* cases we have no *certain* proof, that the effects produced *exceed* the bounds of human power; yet the probability, and the presumption arising from it *against* such power in man, are so exceeding *strong*, as become *almost* equal to such proof.

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### SECTION III.

**S**ECONDLY, I am to enquire, Whether there are any *other* invisible agents but God, which *can*, or which *do*, at least, act upon this globe. And this, likewise, is a task *exceeding difficult*, seeing we have no *footsteps* to trace, nor any thing to *guide* us  
in



in our search after truth, with respect to the question before us. As to any *light* or *information* which may be supposed to be derived from divine revelation, with respect to the present question, that is *naturally* and *necessarily* excluded out of the case. For as the *divinity* of a revelation is the *principal* and *ultimate* end of the general enquiry, and the *great* and *main* point sought after; so that point must not be *supposed*, nor taken for *granted*, nor must any argument, light, or information be *borrowed* from it, in any question *previous* to it. This then, *viz.* Whether there are any *other* invisible agents but God, which *can*, or which *do*, at least, act upon this globe, is a point that must remain *undetermined*; and consequently, neither the *negative*, nor the *affirmative* side of this question is to be taken for granted, in order to prove any other point; because nothing can *certainly* be concluded from either, seeing that would be to draw *certain* conclusions from *uncertain* principles.

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#### SECTION IV.

**T**HIRDLY, supposing there are such invisible agents as aforesaid, then I am to enquire what *kind*, or *degree* of power they are capable of exercising. And here  
also

also we are in the *dark*, and must leave this point under the same *uncertainty* that we find it. For as *invisible* agents are beings which we are perfect *strangers* to, so the *kinds*, or *degrees* of power which may arise from their natural constitutions, are what we have *no* possible way to discover. All, I think, which can be said upon the point, is this, namely, that as there are *various* kinds of beings which God has produced, and which come within our knowledge, so there are *various* kinds, and degrees of power which he hath communicated to those beings. And as power is *capable* of being communicated, so it is equally as *easy* for God to communicate *one* kind, or degree of power as *another*; at least, it is equally as easy for any thing we *know*, or can *shew* to the contrary. But then,

It may be urged, allowing that there are such invisible agents as aforesaid, and, likewise, that we cannot discover what kind, or degree of power may arise from their natural constitutions; yet when *several* such effects take place, as may justly be presumed to exceed the bounds of human power, and when they are produced by *several* instruments in *opposition* to each other, then the *prevailing* power proves itself to be divine.

To this it may be answered, that the *prevalency* of power is *not* a proof that it is divine. *Two* created beings may *contend* for the mastery, and he that has the *greater* power will prevail, if he exerts it with *discretion*.

And

And this will be the case, whether the contending agents are *visible*, or *invisible* beings; so that the *truth*, or *goodness* of a cause, cannot be determined from the *success* of the contenders, because, sometimes, it is not he that has the *best* cause, but he that has the *greatest* power which *gains* the victory. It is true, if *God* interposes in any case, then it is to be presumed that he will give *truth* the victory; but the question will still remain, whether he *does* interpose, or *not*, seeing the *prevalency* of power is not, neither can it be a proof that it is *divine*. Again,

It may be farther urged, that the *raising* a dead person to life, is a work *above* the natural ability or inherent power of any created being; and, therefore, it must be performed by the *immediate* operation or *agency* of *God*.

To which it may be answered, that here is a point *presumed* without *sufficient* ground, and a *consequence* drawn from that presumption, which in *argument* is not to be allowed. The *animal* life (as the case appears to us) has a connexion with, and a dependence upon a *body* fitly organized, and stored with juices, and those juices in a *proper* motion, &c. so that if some of the *principal* parts of the machine are thrown into any *great* disorder, or if the *juices* are let out, or stagnate, or the like, then a *cessation* of life, which we commonly call death, will ensue, except some *speedy* remedy be applied to *correct* the disorder in the machine, or to *stop* the discharge  
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of the fluids, or to *thin*, or *restore* them to their proper motion, &c. or in other words, to remove *that*, whatever it be, which would have been, if not removed, the *ground* and *cause* of the cessation of life. And as life is thus *exposed*, so it has sometimes been preserved when in the *greatest* danger. A skilful surgeon or physician, by a timely interposition, has sometimes *prevented* death, by removing a disorder which, otherwise, would speedily, and unavoidably have ended it. Yea, sometimes, by a timely, and proper application from a skilful person, life has been *restored* after a short cessation; that is, after all the marks and symptoms of life have disappeared; I say, in *some* such instances, life has *seemed*, at least, to have been restored. *Thus far* it is evident that the natural ability of man extends. But that this is the *utmost* extent of human power, ought not be said, because, we cannot tell what *farther* knowledge and experience may render men *capable* of doing. But supposing it may, possibly, be above the natural ability of man to restore life after *one*, or *two*, or *three* days cessation, or some other given time; yet it will not follow that it is above the natural ability of *every other* created being, seeing the *extent* of man's power cannot be a *rule* to us, by which we may judge of the abilities of other agents whom we are not acquainted with.

In the *history* of the deliverance of the children of *Israel* from *Egyptian* bondage,

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we have an account, that the *magicians*, by their *enchantments*, that is, (as it is commonly understood,) by a power derived from evil spirits, turned their *dead rods* into *serpents*, that is, into *living, active beings*, which serpents are known, and allowed to be. And from hence it may be argued, that if an invisible *created* agent could, by his own natural ability, so *change* and *dispose* the particles of matter which constituted a *dead rod*, as that they became an organized body, stored with juices, in a proper motion, and could do whatever was farther necessary to render that dead rod a *living, active being*, (as in the instance above;) then there is a strong probability, that it is within the inherent power of some created beings, to *rectify* the disorders of an organized body, *restore* to it a proper quantity of fluids, put them in *motion*, and do what is *farther* necessary to render it again a *living, active being*, after *one, or two, or three* days *death*, seeing the *latter*, (as far as we can judge,) is as *easy* to be performed as the *former*. So that the proper question arising from hence will be, whether there are any created beings who can, by their *own* natural ability or inherent power, *rectify* the disorders of an organized body, *restore* to it a proper quantity of fluids, put them in *motion*, and do what is *farther* necessary to render it *again* a living creature, after *one, or two, or three* days *death*, or some other given time. But this is what, at  
D present,

present, we have no way to discover, and, therefore, *neither* side of the question is to be taken for granted, in order to prove any other point. Tho' if we admit, as true, what is recorded, as done, by the *magicians* of *Egypt*, in turning *dead rods* into *serpents*, then the *probability* will be on the *affirmative* side of the question, as has been shewn above.

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## SECTION V.

**F**OURTHLY, Supposing there are such invisible agents as aforesaid; then I am to enquire, Whether God will *suffer* them to exert such power as they have, when it is to be exercised for the *delusion* of his creatures. And here, if we argue by *analogy*, that is, if we *infer* from his conduct in *one* case, *how* he will act in *another*, then it is plain, that God *will* suffer invisible agents to exert their power in serving what purposes they *please*. Men, we see, are at *liberty*, and do *actually* delude one another, in *every* kind of *delusion*, tho' it be in points of the *utmost* importance, and for each other's *hurt*, and sometimes, when they have no other advantage from it, but the *bare* pleasure of *deluding*; and thus they deal with the *creatures* below them; and thus, in like manner, *those*  
*creatures*



creatures deal with one another. From whence arises a *strong* probability, that *all* invisible agents (if there are any such) are at *liberty* to exert their power in serving *what* purposes they please. But then,

It may be urged, that it is *inconsistent* with God's *moral* character, as a just and good being, to *suffer* invisible agents to exert their power for the *delusion* of mankind.

To this it may be answered, that as this *restraint* arises from the *purpose* which such power is made subservient to, namely, the delusion of mankind; so when any *kind*, or *degree* of power is to be exercised to answer the *same* end, either by a visible, or an invisible agent, it must be *equally* as *fit* in the nature of the thing, for God to *restrain* it, seeing delusion is the *same* in itself, and as *bad* in its consequences, to the *person* deluded, whether the power which is the *ground* of that delusion be *natural*, or *supernatural*; and seeing it would be *equally* as kind, and good in God, to exercise his restraining power in the *former*, as in the *latter* case. But that God *does not* exercise his *restraining* power in the *former* case, is evident from *experience*. Again,

It may be farther urged, that invisible agents, with respect to their understandings and power, are what men are not an equal match for; and that, if God should *permit* such agents to exert their power for the *delusion* of mankind, this would be to *expose*

the generality of men to such *evils* and *mischiefs* as they are not qualified to guard against; and, that, therefore, it becomes the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God, to interpose and prevent those evils, by *restraining* invisible agents from using their power as aforesaid.

To this it may be replied, that as it is a *popular* argument drawn from the *moral* perfections of God, so it may, in a multitude of instances, be turned *against* them. Almost every tribe of *animals* may take up their complaint, and say, that they are exposed to a multitude of evils and inconveniencies, through the *superior* capacities of men, which they are not an *equal* match for, and, therefore, are not *qualified* to guard against the evils men bring upon them; and that if God were a *wise* and *good* being, he would kindly interpose, and prevent their falling into those evils, or *deliver* them out of them: But he *does not* interpose, as aforesaid, and, therefore, he is *neither* wise nor good. The fly, when it is taken in the *net* the spider has spread for it, may take up its complaint, and say, O wretched, helpless creature that I am! I am now fallen into the *snare* which the *crafty* spider laid for me, whose *superior* capacity I am not an *equal* match for, and whose *mischievous* designs I am not *qualified* to guard against. Surely, if the great governor of the universe were *wise* and *good*, he would have mercifully interposed, and *prevented* my falling into so *great* an evil,

evil, which, by my condition in nature, I was not *qualified* to secure myself from, or he would now interpose and *deliver* me out of it; but he has not, nor does *interpose*, as aforesaid, therefore, he is not *wise* nor *good*, at least, he must be *defective* in *one*, or *other* of these. And,

As this is the case with respect to the animals below us, so it is the same with respect to our *own* species. Each *slave* who is forced to bear, or suffer many *evils* and *miseries* from the *superior* power which a tyrannical governor is possessed of, may take up his complaint, and say, that if God were *wise* and *good*, he would interpose and *restrain* the tyrant from exercising his power, as aforesaid, seeing not only *himself*, but *many* more are forced to suffer the *like* evils, it not being in *their* power to prevent them, or to deliver themselves from them. It is *equally* the *same* to a man, whether his misfortunes are brought upon him by the *superior* power, or *craft* of another; and it would be *equally* as *kind* and *good* for God to interpose and prevent, or remove them, whether they be introduced by the superior power, or craft of a *visible*, or an *invisible* agent. And,

As men are not a match for each other in a variety of cases, so, particularly, with regard to *delusion* and *imposition*; and that too in matters of *religion*. And here it may be proper to suppose that *Mahomet* was an *impostor*, tho', indeed, this may minister *just* ground

ground of complaint to the *Mahometans*; because they may insist, that their prophet ought to be *proved* an impostor, and that we ought not to take it for *granted* that he was so. But this is a question which the present argument is not concerned with, and it is only supposed for argument sake, to illustrate the point now in hand. Supposing then that *Mahomet* was an *impostor*, and that no *invisible* agent was concerned, either in *contriving*, or *propagating* the imposition, yet seeing it did *succeed*, and that not only over a *great* part of the world, but also through a course of *many* ages, and is *like* to succeed through many more; therefore, the question arising from hence will be, whether it would not have been *equally* as *kind* and *good*, for God to have interposed and *prevented* the *Mahometan* delusion, as the case *now stands*, as it would have been, supposing it had been introduced by the *power*, or *craft* of an *invisible* agent. And the answer to this question may, possibly, appear to some, very evident, namely, that *goodness* is as *much* concerned, and would be *equally* shewn in *one* case, as in the other; and from hence they may argue, that seeing God *has not* interposed to prevent delusion in *one* case, therefore, no *good* argument can possibly be drawn from his *wisdom* and *goodness*, to shew that he would have interposed in the *other*. Again,

It may be further urged, that man is endowed with a faculty of *understanding*, by  
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the *right* use and exercise of which, he is qualified to guard against the *Mahometan*, or any other *delusion*, provided it be not backed with the *power* of an *invisible* agent, in working miracles for its confirmation.

To which it may be farther answered, that if men would *rightly* use, and *follow* their understandings, they would thereby be *guarded* and *secured* from every delusion, (or, at least, from all that are *hurtful*,) tho' backed with the power of an invisible agent, as aforesaid; because then every man would be assured, from the nature and reason of the thing, that *no* power, how *great* soever, could possibly be of *God*, which *directly* and *immediately* tended to the *hurt* and *damage* of mankind. And, consequently, if this were the case, then there would be *no place* for the exercise of divine *wisdom* and *goodness*, in preventing the delusion of mankind. But this is *not* the case, seeing the generality of men are so far from using, and following their understandings in *this* particular, that, on the contrary, they are *too apt* to follow every one who takes upon him to *guide* them, and are *very easily* misled and deluded; so that the honest, plain, simple part of mankind, are not an *equal* match for the more subtle and crafty. And it is in *this* view that man is to be considered. The proper question, therefore, is this, *viz.* considering the bulk of mankind in their *present* circumstances, so *liable* to be deluded and imposed upon, whether



ther it would not be *equally* kind and good, for God to interpose and *prevent* their delusion, as well when an invisible agent *is not* concerned in promoting and forwarding it, as when *he is*. And if the divine wisdom and goodness is *equally* concerned, and would be *equally* shewn in *both* cases, (which some men think must be allowed,) then, say they, seeing God *does not* interpose to prevent delusion in *one case*, therefore, no *good* argument can be drawn from his *wisdom* and *goodness*, to *prove* that he *would* interpose in the *other*. But farther, it may be answered,

As it is most evident that delusion *does* take place, so it is alike evident that God *must* permit and suffer it, whilst there are such things as *free* creatures in being. Men will be at liberty, whilst they are *agents*, to exercise their natural abilities in serving *what purposes* they please. *Take away* that liberty, and their agency *ceases*, or is *destroyed*. And this must be the case of *all* intelligent, free beings, whether *visible*, or *invisible*, and whether their *natural* power, (that is, the power arising from their natural constitutions) be *greater*, or *less*. So that to say, it is *morally* unfit for God to *suffer* his creatures to delude or injure one another, is the same as to say, that it is *morally* unfit for God to call *free* creatures into being. But then,

It may be yet farther urged, that tho' God will suffer invisible agents (supposing there are such) to exercise their power in

serving what purpose they please, yet seeing they do not *frequently* exercise their power upon this globe, it becomes a question, whether they do at *any time* exercise it amongst mankind. For if invisible agents *can*, and sometimes *do* exercise their power as aforesaid, then there is *just* ground to presume that they *frequently* do so, because they have *frequent* occasions and opportunities for it; but whereas it is evident they *seldom* (if ever) do; therefore it is *highly* probable that they *do not* exercise their power here at all. And though we cannot discover what may be the *motives* to invisible agents to interest themselves in human affairs, yet seeing the transactions which take place amongst mankind are generally a *round* of the *same things*; so from hence arises a probability that the *motives* to action (if there are any such) to invisible agents *frequently* take place upon this globe, and thereby become *frequently* the *grounds* and *reasons* of actions to them. So that if invisible agents do interest themselves *at all* in the affairs of this world, then it is to be presumed, that they *frequently* do so (as was observed above) because there are *frequently occasions* for, and *excitements* to it. But seeing they *seldom* if ever do, therefore it is *highly* probable, that they *do not* exercise their power here at all; especially if it be considered, that in *many* instances, in which it has been pretended, that such power hath been exercised,

cised, it has been shewn to be no other than *juggle*, or *imposture*.

To which it may be replied, that if this argument proves *any thing*, it proves *too much*, because it concludes as *strongly* against God's exercising his power in enabling men to work miracles at *any time*, seeing it is *seldom* (if ever) that he does; the occasions and excitements returning as *frequently*, and thereby as *frequently* becoming the grounds and reasons of action to *him*, as to *any other* invisible being. For if miracles are at *any time* used to convince men of the *divine* original of a revelation; then, when men grow *sceptical* and *incredulous*, as to the truth of those facts, and consequently are *doubtful* with regard to the divinity of that revelation; when *this* is the case, then *new* miracles become as *useful*, and serve the *same* purposes as those before, *viz.* to work the *conviction* of mankind. And it would be *equally* as *kind* and *good* in God to give them in the *latter*, as in the *former* case. But whereas he *does not* do it in the *latter*, this affords an argument *against* his having done it in the *former*. Again,

It may farther be urged, that God is not in *justice* obliged to *repeat* miracles for the conviction of mankind, when he has *once* given them for that end.

To which it may be replied, that it is *not* justice, but *goodness*, which is the *spring* of action to God in *all such* cases; and that the *kindness* is as *great* to man, and that it would

be *equally* as good in God, to exercise his power in *one* case, as in the *other*, as was observed above.

It may likewise be yet farther urged, that the *frequency* of miracles would render them *useless*.

To which it may be yet farther replied, that the *argument* from miracles is *just* the same, whether they take place *seldom*, or *often*; whether in *every* age, or only in *twenty*, or an *hundred* ages. And from the whole of what has been here offered, it may be thought *just* to infer, that if the *seldomness* of invisible agents acting upon this globe, affords an argument *against* their acting here *at all*, then as God *seldom*, if ever, interposes to enable men to work miracles, from hence arises a *probability*, that he *never* does. Again,

It may be urged, supposing there are *other* invisible agents *besides* God, which act upon this globe; then miracles prove *nothing* with respect to the *divinity* of a revelation. For as it will always be *uncertain*, whether God be the agent in producing those effects which we call miracles, or whether they are produced by the power of *some other* invisible being; so that *uncertainty* will render every *conclusion* (in argument) *weak* and *uncertain*, which is drawn from them. From which it will follow, either, *first*, that there are *no other* invisible agents *but* God, which *can*, or which *do* (at least) act upon this globe; or if there *are*, or *may* be such, then it will



follow, *secondly*, that miracles prove *nothing* in the present case; because it will be *uncertain*, with respect to every miracle, whether *God* be the agent in producing it, or *not*.

To this it may be answered, that as to the *first* of those inferences, it is a *conclusion* drawn from *doubtful* and *uncertain* premises. That is, there is *no* principle in *nature*, or *reason*, from whence the forementioned point can be *certainly* inferred; and therefore that inference (*viz.* that there is *no other* invisible agent *but God*, which *can*, or which *does* act upon this globe) must pass for a *cypher* in argument. And as to the *second* inference, *viz.* admitting that there *are*, or *may be* other invisible agents *besides* God, which *can*, or which *do* (at least) act upon this globe, then miracles prove *nothing* with respect to the divinity of a revelation; this *conclusion* may be thought *too strong* for the premises. For though with respect to any miracle, we cannot be *certain* that God is the agent in producing it, yet if the circumstances which attend the case render it *probable* that he did, then it will follow, that tho' miracles cannot afford *certain*, yet they may afford *probable proof* in favour of the divinity of a revelation. What those circumstances are, which may be judged to be a just foundation for such a probability, will be considered in their due place.



## SECTION VI.

FIFTHLY and lastly, I am to enquire, Whether a man who may be said to work a miracle (as the case is explained above) is at liberty to use such miracle-working power well, or ill, and employ it in serving what purposes he pleases. This enquiry is in some measure answered in the precedent section, in which it is observed, that men will be at liberty, whilst they are *agents*, to exercise their natural ability in serving what purposes they please; for take away that liberty, and their agency *ceases*, or is *destroyed*. And, as this is the case with respect to the *natural* abilities of men, so it must be the same with regard to all *supernatural* power which may be superadded, whether it be that of working miracles, or otherwise. For, as the exercise of such power depends upon a *man's will*, or at least he is *afore* apprized of the exercise of it; so, in the very nature of the thing, it must be at his *option* to direct it this way, or that way, to make it attend the truth, or a lie. Indeed, God may, if he please, give to, or with-hold such miracle-working power from a man, or he may withdraw it when given; but then he cannot give it, and restrain a man in the use of it at the same

same time, that being a contradiction, and an impossibility in nature.

If it should be urged as above, admitting this, then miracles prove nothing with respect to the divinity of a revelation. For, if he who works a miracle is at liberty to annex it to *truth*, or *falsehood*, of which a by-stander cannot possibly be a judge, whether it be annexed to one, or the other of these; then it will follow, that miracles prove nothing in the present case,

To this it may be answered as above, *viz.* that this conclusion may be thought too strong for the premises. For, though with respect to any miracle, we cannot be *certain* that it is annexed to truth, yet if the circumstances which attend the case render it *probable* that it is, then it will follow, that though miracles cannot afford certain, yet they may afford probable proof in favour of the divinity of a revelation.

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## SECTION VII.

**H**AVING thus prepared the way, by shewing, *first*, that we cannot possibly know the utmost extent, nor fix the bounds of human power; *secondly*, that we cannot know

know whether any other invisible agent but God can, or does (at least) act upon this globe; *thirdly*, supposing there are other invisible agents besides God, which do act as aforesaid, yet we do not know what kind, or degree of power they are capable of exercising; *fourthly*, if there are other invisible agents besides God, who act upon this globe, then God will permit and suffer them to use their power in serving what purposes they please, at least he will permit them to act thus, for any thing we know, or for any grounds we have from which we may fairly and justly conclude the contrary; and *fifthly*, a man, who may be said to work a miracle, (as explained above) is at liberty to use such miracle-working power well, or ill, by annexing it either to the truth, or to a lie; these points being laid down as principles, from hence two conclusions will clearly and unavoidably follow, namely,

First, That those effects which are wonderful and surprizing, but of which we have no just grounds for presuming that they exceed the bounds of human power, and consequently cannot fairly presume that they are produced by the power of an invisible being; if such are offered as evidences to prove the divine original of a revelation, the proof (if any there be) arising from them, can be but a *low degree* of probability. For, as it is uncertain, whether the operations referred to  
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be annexed to truth, or falshood, and as it is uncertain whether those operations are supernatural; so, if they are supernatural, yet it is alike uncertain whether they are divine operations, seeing they may not be performed by God, but by the agency of some other invisible being. And therefore, though all other proper circumstances concurred in favour of such evidence, yet seeing the *three* forementioned points of uncertainty attend the case, this renders the probability arising from that evidence so much the weaker, and consequently, the proof arising from it can be but a *low degree* of probability. Again,

Secondly, It will follow from the principles before laid down, that with respect to all those effects of which it may justly be presumed, that they exceed the bounds of human power, and consequently, that they are produced by the power and interposition of some invisible agent; if these are offered as evidences to prove the divine original of a revelation, the proof arising from them at most can be *but probable*, because we cannot possibly come to any certainty, whether the miracles referred to be annexed to truth, or falshood; nor whether God is the agent in those operations, or whether they be performed by the power or agency of some other invisible being. So that supposing all other proper circumstances concurred in favour of such evidence, yet as the *two* forementioned points

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of uncertainty attend the case, therefore, the proof arising from that evidence, at most, cannot be certain, but *only probable*, seeing it does not imply a contradiction, nor an impossibility in nature to suppose the contrary. And, from hence *two* questions will arise, namely; what are those circumstances that may attend a miracle, which may make it *probable* that it is annexed to truth, rather than to a lie? And what are those circumstances which may make it *probable* that God is the agent in such an operation, rather than any other invisible being? But, as the answer to the *first* of these questions will be contained in, and may easily be collected from the answer to the *second*, therefore, I shall drop the former, and give an answer to the latter of those questions only.

But before this question can be fairly considered and answered, it is to be observed, that there are *two* or *three* things to be *supposed* or admitted as *proper* foundations for argument with respect to it, *viz.* *First*, That there is a natural and essential *difference* in things, and that *one* thing or action is really *better* or *preferable* to another in nature. *Secondly*, That there is a *rule* of *action* resulting from that difference, which *every* moral agent ought in reason to *govern* his *actions* by. *Thirdly*, That *God*, as the governor of the intelligent and moral world, makes the *reason* of things the *rule* and *measure* of his

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actions, in *all* his dealings with his creatures, and this renders him absolutely and perfectly *wise* and *good*. These points must be *presumed* or taken for *granted*, for, otherwise, there is not any principle we can *reason from*, nor any thing which will be a *proper* foundation for argument in the present case. But if it be *admitted* that God is absolutely and perfectly *wise* and *good*, as aforesaid, then it will follow, that all *divine* revelations are given for the *good* of mankind, and that in *all* God's dealings with his creatures, he will act a part which is *worthy* of, and *suitable* to such a character; and this will be a *proper* foundation for argument with respect to the question before us.

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## SECTION VIII.

**I**T being *supposed* in the precedent section, that *such* circumstances may attend a miracle, as render it *more likely* and *probable* that God is the agent in producing that effect, rather than *any other* invisible being; and it likewise being *premised* that God always acts *suitable* to his character, as a *wise* and *good* being, the present question is, *what* those circumstances are, upon which  
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the aforefaid *likelihood* and *probability* can be fairly grounded? And the answer to this question is, that those circumstances must regard either the *fact itself*, or else the *revelation itself*, which the *fact* is brought to vouch for. And,

*First*, As to the *fact itself*, the circumstances which attend it, and which can be of any consequence in the present case, must either regard the *kind*, or *degree* of power which is exercised in that fact, or else the *good*, or *evil* which that power (considered abstractedly from the revelation) is *introductive to*, or is the *cause* of. As to the *first*, viz. the *kind*, or *degree* of power which is exercised in a miracle; nothing can be fairly concluded from hence, either *for*, or *against* its being wrought by *God*, rather than by *some other* invisible agent, because, (as was observed above,) it is *equally as easy* for *God* to communicate *one kind*, or *degree* of power, as *another*; at least, it is so for any thing *we know*, or can *shew* to the *contrary*. So that there is not *any* kind, or degree of power which may be exercised upon this globe, (that of raising the dead not excepted,) but may be *inherent to*, and be the *natural result* of the constitution of some creature, seeing *God can*, and for any thing we know, *may* have communicated *such kind*, or *degree* of power; I say, that this may be the case, for any thing *we know*, or can *prove* to the *contrary*,

*trary*, and, therefore, *nothing* can certainly be concluded on *either* side; because, that would be to draw *certain* conclusions from *uncertain* principles, which is *absurd*. And to say, that God *cannot* communicate this, or that *kind*, or *degree* of power, is, plainly, to *limit* and set *bounds* to the *boundless* power of God, and is *presuming* a point, without the *least* ground for it. Again,

Secondly, As the power which is exercised in a miracle may be (when considered abstractedly from the revelation) introductive to, or be the cause of *good*, or it may be introductive to, or be the cause of *evil*, so it may be judged, that *one* of these puts the *probability* on *one* side, and the *other* puts the *probability* on the *other* side of that question. That is, if the power which is exercised in a miracle is the immediate cause of, or is introductive to the *good* of mankind, this makes it *probable* that it was wrought by a *divine* hand, (except some *other* circumstance attends the case, which *weakens* or *destroys* that probability;) because it is *more likely* that God should thus kindly interpose for the *common good* of his creatures, than that *one creature* should thus interpose in *favour* of the rest. But if the power which is exercised in a miracle is introductive to, and is the cause of *evil* to mankind, this makes it *probable* that such a miracle *was not* wrought by God, but by the power of *some other* invisible agent;

gent; because, if we suppose such power to be *divine*, there would be a *preposterousness* in the divine conduct, that is, in God's giving a *revelation* to *mankind*, intending it for their *good*, and then *proving* to them that it is *divine*, by working a miracle which directly and immediately was the cause of, or was introductive to their *hurt*; such a conduct in *God* would be *preposterous*, and, therefore, the *supposition* is not to be admitted.

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## SECTION IX.

**A** GAIN, *secondly*, The *other* circumstances which come into the present question, are such as relate to the *revelation itself*, out of which the forementioned *likelihood* and *probability* must arise, that the miracles wrought in *favour* of the divinity of that revelation, are wrought by *God*, rather than by *any other* invisible being. And those circumstances must be such, in which God's *moral* character is concerned; that is, God's *wisdom* and *goodness* must be shewn in, and by the revelation, in its being subservient to *virtue* and *goodness*, and, consequently, to the *happiness* of mankind, both *here*, and *hereafter*,

*hereafter*, there being *no other* circumstances *but these* that can attend a revelation, out of which the forementioned *likelihood* or *probability* can arise; and when this is the case, then it may be urged, that there is a *likelihood*, or a *probability*, that those effects which are *above* the natural ability of man to cause or produce, were produced by a *divine* hand. For as God is the *common* parent of his creatures, and the *natural* guardian of their happiness, and, *as such*, it may *fairly* be presumed, that *he has* a much *greater* concern and regard for their *well being*, than *any other* agent, so it is *more likely* that *he* should interpose for their *common* safety, than that *one* creature should thus interpose in *favour* of the rest, as has been already observed. So that when the *subject* matter of a revelation is subservient to *virtue* and *goodness*, and, consequently, to the *present* and *future* happiness of mankind; and when the *miracles* wrought in favour of the *divinity* of that revelation, consist of *such* facts as are the immediate cause of, or are introductive to their *good*; those circumstances may be judged to render it *likely* and *probable* that God is the agent in producing *such* effects, rather than *any other* invisible being, except some *other circumstances* attend the case, which *weaken*, or *destroy* that probability.



## SECTION X.

HAVING shewn, in the *two* precedent sections, what those *circumstances* are, which *do*, or which may be judged to render it *likely* and *probable* that *God* is the agent, (rather than *any other* invisible being,) in producing those effects which we call *miracles*, and which are wrought in *favour* of the *divinity* of a revelation; I now proceed to enquire what those *other* circumstances are, which *do*, or which may be judged either to *strengthen*, or else to *weaken*, or *destroy* that *probability*. *First*, If the wisdom and goodness which is shewn *in* and *by* a revelation runs thro' *all* its parts; and, *secondly*, if that revelation be communicated to *all* who *alike* stand in need of it; if *these* circumstances *attend* a revelation, then they very much *heighten* the probability that those miracles wrought in its *favour* were wrought by a *divine* hand; but if *those* circumstances, or *either* of them are *wanting*, then it very much *weakens* that probability. And,

*First*, If a revelation, *backed* with miracles, should naturally and apparently tend to the *good* of mankind *throughout*, and if *wisdom* and *goodness* shew themselves thro' *all* its parts, then this *heightens* the forementi-

oned probability, as a revelation *thus* constituted is so much *more* worthy of the *best* of beings, and *more* suitable to our *natural* notions of the deity. But if a revelation, *backed* with miracles, should naturally and apparently tend to the *good* of mankind in *one* branch of it, and as naturally and apparently tend to their *hurt* in *another*; then this would, at least, very much *weaken* the fore-mentioned probability: Yea, it may be urged, that it makes it *probable*, that the miracles wrought in *favour* of *such* a revelation, *were not* wrought by *God*, but by the agency of *some other* invisible being; because the natural and apparent *evil* which *springs* from *some* parts of that revelation, is an *indication* of a *defect* of *goodness* in the being it proceeded from, which *cannot* be the case with respect to God. But then,

It may be urged, that those branches of a revelation which naturally and apparently tend to the *hurt* of mankind, may, in their *secret* and *remote* consequences, turn to their *greater good*; of which *God* is the *only* judge, who sees things as well in their *secret* and *remote*, as in their *natural* and *apparent* consequences. And, therefore, no *good* argument can be drawn from the natural and apparent *evil* of a revelation *against* its divinity, or *against* the divinity of those *miracles* which are wrought in its *favour*.

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To which it may be answered, that if this *proves* any thing, it proves *too much*. For if we *are not* to form a judgment of *good* and *evil* in this case from what is natural and apparent, but from what is secret and remote; then the most *barbarous* and *cruel*, and the most *burdensome* institutions may be of *God*; because these, for ought we know, may in their *secret* and *remote* consequences, some way or other, turn to the *good* and *benefit* of some or other of *mankind*. So that no *good* argument can be drawn *for*, or *against* the *divinity* of a revelation; nor *for*, or *against* the *divinity* of those miracles which are wrought in its favour, from the *good*, or *evil*, which springs from it: seeing it is not the *good*, or *evil*, which is *naturally* and *apparently* the result of *any* revelation (and which alone man is *qualified* to discern) but it is such *good* and *evil* as *secretly* and *remotely* springs from it (and which man is *not* qualified to discern and reason from) that must determine the case.

Besides, if the *secret* and *remote* consequences of things are to be taken into the case, and made a *foundation* for argument, then there is *scarce any* revelation which has *hitherto* come forth under an *heavenly* character, but this kind of reasoning may be turned *against* it. For though it *cannot* be discerned at the *time* of delivery, what will be the *secret* and *remote* consequences of any re-

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velation; yet *after-times* may shew, or at least may furnish men with materials to *guess* what *those* consequences are, which *men* in former times *could not* discover. And a *sceptick*, or an *unbeliever*, may from hence raise an argument *against* the divinity of those revelations which have *hitherto* been considered as divine, by observing how many *evils* and *mischiefs* they have been the *parents* of, or are judged to be so, when considered in their *unnatural* and *latest* consequences; so that it will be exceeding difficult to make it appear, that there has been as *much* good, as evil produced by them; and consequently, if this kind of reasoning be *just*, it will furnish out an argument *against*, rather than in *favour* of the *divinity* of those revelations, which have come forth under an *heavenly* character; and *against*, rather than *for* the divinity of those miracles, which may have been wrought in their *favour*; though in truth, *nothing* can be *fairly* concluded in the present case, because a revelation cannot in reason be *justly* chargeable with any consequences, but what *visibly*, *naturally*, and *apparently* spring from it. Again,

Secondly, If a revelation which *wholly* tends to the *good* of mankind is *backed* with miracles as aforesaid, and is given to *all* who *alike* stand in need of it; then it may be urged, that *this* circumstance very much *heightens* the probability that those miracles wrought in its *favour*



*favour* are *divine*, as such a conduct is *worthy* of the common parent of mankind, who pities *equally* every *pitiable* object, and whose *tender mercies* are over *all* his works. But if *such* a revelation should be given to *one* nation or people only, when the *rest* of mankind stand *alike* in need of it, then it may be urged, that such a *partial* conduct makes it *probable*, that it *was not* God, but *some other* invisible agent, who wrought those miracles in favour of that revelation. For as *true goodness* disposes the being in which it resides to minister relief *alike* to *all* in distress, if they are *alike* objects of pity, and if there is *equal* power to relieve *all* as *some*; so when relief is ministered *partially* as aforesaid, then the question is, whether this be not an indication of *want* of goodness in the administrator, which surely *cannot* be the case with respect to God.

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## SECTION XI.

**A**S it is supposed in the precedent section, that the giving a revelation *partially* to some, and *not* universally to all, *destroys*, or at least very much *weakens* the probability that those miracles wrought in favour

of the divinity of that revelation are wrought by a divine hand, supposing *all* other circumstances concurred in its *favour*; so it seems proper here to take notice of the *various* reasonings which may be offered on *either* side of that question. As thus,

It may be urged, though our great and kind Creator *intended*, that *all* his creatures should be *happy*, and therefore, made a suitable and proper *provision* that they might attain it; yet he *did not* intend, and therefore *did not* provide that *all* should attain the *same* degree of happiness, much less that they should *all* attain to the *highest* degree of it. This is abundantly evident from the *various* species of creatures which God hath called into being, who are very *differently* qualified to obtain happiness, and whose happiness, when attained, admits of *degrees*, some *greater*, some *less*. All are not made *angels*, all are not made *men*; but there are a *great variety* of species of beings who are *intended* for happiness, and yet they *are not* designed, and therefore *are not* qualified to attain to *so high* a degree of it, as men and angels are *capable* of attaining. Again,

As God *did not* intend, that *every* species of creatures should attain to *equal* degrees of happiness; so he *did not* intend, and therefore *has not* provided that *all* and *every* individual of any species should attain to the *same* degree of it. This is abundantly evident

dent from the *great difference* there is with respect to the *capacities*, and the *circumstances* of men, by which they are very *differently* qualified to obtain happiness, and which probably will occasion a very *great* difference in the happiness they shall attain. And as the difference of *capacities* and *circumstances* amongst mankind, by which they are *qualified* for attaining *different* degrees of happiness, is what *God* could not but *foresee*, as it results from the original frame and constitution of things, and yet has not *provided* against; so he could not *but intend*, that such *different* capacities and circumstances should take place amongst mankind, and consequently, that *different* degrees of happiness should be obtained by them. And,

As divine revelation is *only* intended to render those who enjoy it capable of attaining to a *greater* degree of happiness, which otherwise they would be in *danger* of *not* attaining; and as all those who are *destitute* of divine revelation are *capable* of attaining to *happiness*, though of a *much* lower degree, and this is *all* which justice and equity require that *God* should do for them: so if *God* gives a revelation *only* to *part* of mankind, and thereby renders them *only* capable of attaining to such *greater* degrees of happiness, as that revelation becomes *subservient* to, and leaves the *rest* of our species under a *disability* to attain to such *greater* degrees of  
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happiness, but still with *ability* to obtain a *lesser* degree of it, then he is not *more partial*, nor *less benevolent* in *this*, than in the *two former* cases; that is, if God's *not* giving a revelation to *all*, but *only* to a *part* of mankind, when all stood *alike* in need of it, be an instance of his acting *partially* with his creatures, and renders him *defective* in point of benevolence, toward those who *have not* the advantage of that revelation; then he is *alike partial*, and also *defective* in point of *benevolence*, in not making *all* his creatures *capable* of attaining to *equal* degrees of happiness, and likewise in his *not* giving *equal* capacities to *all* men, and *not* putting them under the *same* advantageous circumstances, as might render them *capable* of attaining to the *highest* happiness which human nature is capable of attaining. But God cannot *fairly* be charged with *partiality*, nor with a *defect* in point of benevolence in the *two* latter cases; and therefore, he cannot *fairly* be charged with these in the *former*.

To which it may be answered, *first*, that as to angels, we know *nothing* about them, either as to their *capacities*, or to the *degree* of their happiness; and therefore, they ought not to be brought into the question. And as to the *various* species of beings, which take place upon this globe, and which are qualified for *different* degrees of happiness, these were not called into being for the sake of *variety*,



riety, but that a *much greater good* might be carried on thereby. Suppose *all* the various species of beings below us had been made *men*, then this *globe* could not have afforded *provision*, nor would it have been a *proper* habitation for them. And suppose God had made *none* but men, and had left all the *other* species of beings in *non-existence*, then *all* the *good* which is exercised upon, and which is now shewn to the *several* species of beings below us, would have been *sunk* and *lost*. And as to our *own* species, our condition in life, *without* the other creatures, would have been *much worse* than it is *now* with them. And as it was not for the sake of *variety*, that God made so *many* different species of beings, but that a *much greater good* might be carried on thereby; so if a *more general good* would be carried on, by a revelation's being given *partially* to *some*, than it would be by its being given *generally* to *all*, if *this* were the case, then the *cases* under consideration would be *parallel*; but this does not *appear* to be the case, and therefore, *those cases* in point of argument admit of *no* comparison; that is, there is the *appearance* at least of great partiality, and a defect of benevolence in *one* case; whereas, there is *no such* appearance with respect to the other. Again,

It may be answered, *secondly*, that the present constitution of things is the *best* which nature would admit of, to answer the great design

design intended to be carried on thereby, *viz.* a *publick* or *general* good. For if things *could* have been *better* constituted for the answering that end, then we have *just* ground to presume, that they *would* have been so, as God will *most certainly* pursue such a *valuable* end, by the *best*, and *most effectual* means for its attainment. And as the difference betwixt the capacities, and circumstances of men, which differently qualifies them to attain happiness, results from the *original* frame and constitution of things, and is perfectly *accidental* with respect to *each* individual; so this is an *evil* which *could not* be provided against, without the introduction of some other *equal*, or *greater* evil; and therefore, if a *more* general good would be carried on by a revelation's being given *partially* to *some*, than would be by its being given *generally* to *all*; and if the giving of it generally to all would be introductive of some *equal*, or *greater* evil than what results from its being given *partially* to *some*, if this *appeared* to be the case, then the *cases* under consideration must be allowed to be *parallel*; but this *does not* appear to be the case, and therefore, they admit of *no* comparison; that is, there is the *appearance* at least of great *partiality*, and a *defect* of *benevolence* in *one* case; whereas, there is *no such* appearance with respect to the *other*. Again,

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It may be answered, *thirdly*, that to consider divine revelation as *only* intended to *qualify* men for attaining *greater* degrees of happiness, than otherwise they are in great danger of not attaining, is a very *defective* and *partial* representation of the *purposes* which it may *justly* be expected such a revelation would be intended to serve. Man is an accountable creature, who is answerable to God for his actions, and who will be rewarded or punished in another world, according as he behaves himself in this; and the *generality* of mankind (spread up and down upon the face of the earth) when considered without a divine revelation, are supposed to be attended with such *great difficulties* and *impediments*, which stand in the way of their *future* safety, as that they are in *great* danger, not *only* of *not* attaining to the *highest* degree of happiness which human nature is capable of, but *also* of *not* attaining unto *any* degree of happiness at all; yea they are in *great* danger of falling into a state of *great* and *lasting* misery. This either *is*, or is judged to *be* the deplorable state of the *generality* of mankind *without* a revelation. So that it may *justly* be expected, that the *purpose* which a *divine* revelation would be intended to serve, would be, not *barely* to qualify men for obtaining a *higher* degree of happiness than otherwise they are in danger of not obtaining; but *also* to engage them

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to attain happiness *itself* in opposition to its *contrary*, and to *prevent* their being *greatly* and *lastingly* miserable, which misery they are in *great* danger of bringing upon themselves. Now the proper question arising from hence is, not what God in strict justice is *obliged* to do for a species of creatures fallen into such deplorable circumstances, but what *pity* and *kindness* would dispose him to do towards their relief. And, if God out of a tender regard for the well-being of his creatures, kindly interposed for the relief of some, then the question is, whether *that* regard for his creatures well-being would not *equally* dispose him to interpose for the relief of *all* in *those* circumstances.

To which it may be added, that if a revelation's being given partially to some, and not universally to all, be for the sake of that *beauty* which arises from *variety*, and that it might give *occasion* to God to communicate *different* degrees of happiness to his creatures; then that *end* will as *effectually* be obtained by God's giving *no* revelation at all, or by his making that revelation *universal*, as it will by his giving it *partially*, as aforesaid: for in *each* case, there will be *different* abilities, opportunities, improvements, and attainments among mankind, which will introduce that *beauty* that arises from *variety*, and there will be *occasion* given to God to communicate *different* degrees of happiness to his creatures, as well



well in *either* of the *two* former cases, as in the *latter*. However, if the giving of a revelation partially, as aforesaid, does not *destroy* the probability arising from such evidences as are offered in favour of its divinity ; yet it may be urged, that it very much *weakens* that probability, except the *difficulty* before shewn to arise from such partiality can be *removed*. But then,

It may be asked, what *motive* could induce *any other* invisible agent besides God (supposing there are such) to *back* with miracles a revelation *thus* constituted for the good of mankind, though *partially* given, as aforesaid ?

To which it may be answered, that tho' *such* a procedure could not be *accounted* for, yet the question would still remain, whether such a *partial* conduct be *divine* ? As to those free beings which come within our *knowledge*, we see their *actions*, but are very little *acquainted* with the *motives* they spring from. And if we are *so little* acquainted with the *springs* of action in our *own* species, how then can it be expected, that we should *account* for the conduct of those *invisible* beings, the *extent* of whose power, and the *motives* to whose actions we are *perfect* strangers to ? However, in this case it may be urged, that it is more likely that a *creature*, who may have *different* motives to act from, should shew kindness to *one*, and not to *another*,

when he *can* serve them both, and both are *alike* the objects of his regard (supposing that to be the case) than that *God* should *do so*, seeing he always does good for *goodness* sake, and therefore, it is most likely, that he will dispense his favours *alike* to all, who are *alike* the objects of his goodness. Again,

It may be urged, that when a revelation which *wholly* tends to the good of mankind, and which *lays claim* to a heavenly character, is *backed* with miracles, that revelation *must* be divine, though *partially* delivered as aforesaid; because as an *evil* or *vicious* invisible agent *would not* be the author of so much *good* to others, as the recommending such a revelation might be subservient to; so a *good* or *virtuous* invisible agent *could not* recommend such a revelation as divine, and preserve his *character*, if it were not so; and therefore, he *would not* do it. For as this would be bearing *witness* to a falshood, and would be an *imposition* upon mankind; so that will be a *reason against* a good being's recommending a revelation under *such* a character, tho' ever so *kindly* intended; because it would be doing *evil*, that *good* may come of it, which surely a good being *would not* chuse to do. And if *neither* a virtuous, nor a vicious invisible agent, would exercise their power in recommending as *divine*, a revelation circumstanced, as aforesaid, if it were not so; then it will follow, that a revelation *thus* circum-

stanced, and *thus* attested to by miracles, as above, *must* be of God.

As to *vicious* invisible beings, it may be answered, that *no being* is *necessarily* vicious, that being *absurd*. And therefore, though the *generality* of a being's actions are *vicious*, and that may entitle him to the character of a *vicious* being; yet it does not follow, that he *will not*, in *any* instance, act otherwise; because, for ought *we* know, such motives may *intervene*, as may become a ground or reason to him to *do good* in *some* instances, and thereby act *contrary* to his *general* character. This is manifestly *the case* amongst our *own* species, there being instances of persons who *sometimes* act *contrary* to their *general* characters; that is, there are *bad* men, who in *some* instances perform *good* actions; and there are *good* men, who in *some* instances perform *bad* ones; and this may be the case of *invisible* agents, for any thing *we* know to the contrary. And admitting there *are*, or *may* be vicious invisible beings (that is, beings who are led on to action from *evil* or *vitiating* affections) and who in compliance with *such* temptations as are present to them do act *repugnant* to reason; yet it is *unreasonable* to suppose, that any *particular* invisible agent, or *society* of such agents, should enter into a resolution *never* to do any thing which might be for the *good* of mankind, though they should have *both* power  
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and opportunity so to do. This, I say, is an unreasonable supposition; because it does not *appear*, that our species have given *any* occasion to *any* vicious invisible agent, or society of such agents, to take up *such* a resentment against us, as *never* to do any thing for the *good* of any of us, though *ability* and *opportunity* should invite them to it. So that we have *no* assurance, that a *vicious* invisible agent *will not* exercise his power in recommending revelation as aforesaid. And,

As to *virtuous* invisible agents, it may be answered, that though in the *general* we ought to have a strict regard to *truth* in our intercourse with each other, because the *common good* is manifestly interested in it, and depends upon it; yet there may be *some* extraordinary cases, in which it may be *right* and *fit* for us to do otherwise. Suppose a man to have such an *antipathy* against *Jesuits* bark, as that he would not be prevailed upon to take it, though his *life* was in the *greatest* danger, and though the taking that medicine was the *only* means which was *likely* to preserve it: The question in this case is, whether it would be *wrong* and *unfit* for a physician to recommend *this* medicine to *such* a patient under *another* name; and if he had any jealousy about it, to endeavour to convince him, that it was *another* thing? And the answer is evident, that it would not. For though the man in this case is *deceived*, yet it



is not to his *hurt*, but for his *good*; and therefore, *that* deceit cannot properly come under the denomination of *evil*, but *good*; and this is not doing evil, that good may come of it; because, strictly speaking, there is *no* evil in the case; that is, there is none in the *end*, nor yet in the *means* by which that end is obtained. In like manner, suppose an *invisible* agent should kindly interpose and give a revelation to *some* part of mankind, which highly tended to their *good*; and suppose he should be satisfied, that this revelation *would not* be accepted, unless it came recommended as *divine*; and therefore, that it might obtain *acceptance*, and might do *that good* which he proposed by it, he endeavours to convince those to whom it was delivered that it *came* from *God*, by enabling the *promulger* to work a *miracle*, or *miracles*, for that purpose: In *this* case the question is, whether *such* an action be *evil*, and whether *such* a conduct be *inconsistent* with a *virtuous* character? To which it may be answered, that it *would not*; because, strictly speaking, there is *nothing* evil or vicious in it. But then,

It may be said, that such an action would be *highly provoking* to Almighty God; because it would be fathering that upon him, which would not belong to him.

To which it may be answered, that as the great director of the universe is not governed by

by *capricious humour*, but by the *reason of things*, so, in the present case, there could not be any *just* ground of displeasure to him, because, in reality, there would no dishonour *be done*, nor *intended* to be done to him, and his name would only be used to promote an end which he could not but approve of, *viz.* the good of his creatures. Again,

It may be said, that *truth* has an *intrinsic* goodness in it, as it stands opposed to *deceit* and *falsehood*; and, therefore, tho' God cannot but like the behaviour of his creatures when they are promoting each other's good, provided the *means* be *laudable* and *commendable* by which that *end* is obtained, yet he cannot but *dislike* it, when it is obtained by *deceit* and *falsehood*, because *such* a conduct is evil and vicious.

To this it may be answered, that *truth* and *good* are as *distinct*, and *different* in nature, as *colour* and *sound*; so that truth, is not good, neither is good, truth, these being terms which are used to express ideas that are *distinct* and *different* from each other. And, as truth, *is not* good, so it *does not* stand opposed to evil, but to falsehood; falsehood being the *opposite* to truth, as evil is the *opposite* to good: And, therefore, to say that truth is good, or that falsehood is evil, when these are considered *abstractedly* from that good, or evil which either of them may be *subservient* to, is, plainly, to *confound* the use of words. So  
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that *truth* and *falsehood*, when considered *abstractedly*, properly speaking, are *neither* good, nor evil, but become *so* by that good, or evil they are *productive* of. And here, surely, it will be allowed, that if a man should *report* the faults and weakneses of his neighbour, not to answer a *good*, but an *evil purpose*, such an action would be *evil* and *vicious*, tho' he reported nothing but the *truth*. And yet, if truth has an *intrinsic* goodness in it, when considered *abstractedly* from the end it is made to serve, then the forementioned *action* would not be *evil*, but *good*. And if telling the truth to answer a *bad* purpose, be *evil* and *vicious*, which is an *allowed* case, then by parity of reason, saying a thing that is not true, to answer a *good purpose*, may, in *some extraordinary* cases, be *good* and *virtuous*. Again,

It may be said, that tho' truth is not good, strictly and properly speaking, yet it is *analogous* to it, as it has a *natural* and *intrinsic* valuableness in it, which renders it *preferable* to its contrary, and by which the understanding is as *naturally led* to pursue it, as the will is to *chuse* and pursue what is good.

To this it may be answered, that truth comes under a *twofold* consideration, *viz.* *first*, the *truth* of *things*, and, *secondly*, a *true* relation of our *opinions* concerning them. In the former case *truth* stands opposed to *error*, and in the latter to *falsehood*. And tho' with  
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respect to the *former*, truth has an *intrinsic* valuableness in it, as it is in nature *preferable* to its contrary, and by which the understanding is naturally led to pursue it; yet it it *otherwise* when it is considered in the *latter* case, for then *truth* commences an *action* or *fact*, and as such is the *object*, not of the understanding, but of the will. A man does not *necessarily* speak truth, or falsehood, (as he *necessarily* perceives the truth, or falseness of a proposition,) but *either* of these are the produce of his *election*, resulting from some *motive* that intervenes, and which is to him the *ground* or *reason* of his choice. And when truth thus commences an action or fact, it then becomes *good*, or *evil*, only by the good, or evil *purposes* it is made to serve. As thus, the whole is equal to all its parts; this is a proposition, the *truth* of which our understandings *qualify* us to discover, and when it is discovered, we *approve* and *value* it as *truth*, (not as *good*,) in opposition to every *error* which may be opposed to it. But if a man is to *relate* his opinion concerning the truth, or falseness of that proposition, that relation is plainly a *matter* of *fact*, and the *good*, or *evil* of that fact must, in the nature of the thing, be *deduced* from the good, or evil *purposes* which it is made to serve, and not from the *truth*, or *falseness* of what is *related* by it. Suppose he *relates* the *truth*, but does it with an *evil* intention; the



truth of the relation cannot *alter* the action, and make that *fact* good, which in the nature of the thing is evil. Again,

It may be farther said, that this opens a door to *deceit* and *falsehood*, and tends to destroy all *trust* and *confidence* amongst mankind. For if there are *cases* in which deceiving is *justifiable*, men will from thence take encouragement to deceive in *any case*, and *justify* themselves in it, and, consequently, all *ground* of confidence is taken away.

To which it may be answered, that this *kind* of reasoning proves just as much, as if it should be said, that because it is *allowed* to be justifiable in *some* extraordinary cases for a man to take away the *life* of another, (*viz.* when it is in the *defence* of his own,) men will from hence take encouragement to *murder* each other upon *all occasions*, and to *justify* themselves in it, and, consequently, all peace and safety would be *banished* from society. *This* may be urged with *equal* strength as the *former*, the reasoning being the *same* in both cases. But surely, no man will think such *reasonings*, or the *conclusions* drawn from them to be *just*. A *good* man will know how to distinguish *justly* in *both* cases, and as to *bad* men, no principle will *restrain* them. However, this is beside the point, because the proper question is, whether what has been advanced is the *truth*, and not *what use* bad men are *liable* to make

of it, who are disposed to make a *bad* use of the *best* things. Besides, what is it which renders speaking truth in *general*, and *mutual* confidence so *valuable*? Is it not, because the *good* of society *arises* from, and *depends* upon them? And if so, then their valuableness *results* from the good they are subservient to, which is the point contended for. From what has been said, it may be inferred, that we can have *no assurance* that a *virtuous*, invisible agent *will not* exercise his power in recommending a revelation as *divine*, which, in reality, is *not so*, when that revelation is *circumstanced* as aforesaid. Again,

It may be farther urged, that tho' God does give a revelation to *one* nation, and not to *another*, yet seeing those who have it *not*, have their *reason* and *understanding* to guide them, and seeing God will deal with them according to the light they *have*, and not according to what they have not; therefore, he cannot *fairly* be charged with *want* of kindness, nor with *partiality* in the case.

To which it may be answered, that what is said of the *latter*, is *equally* the case of *both*, supposing *no* revelation had been given at all: And, therefore, if a revelation is useful, or necessary, or a kindness to *one* nation, it must be alike useful, or necessary, or a kindness to *all*, or, at least, to all in *like* circumstances; and, consequently, the question is, whether the giving it to one, and not  
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to all, has not in it the *appearance*, at least, of *great partiality*? If *one* man should overtake *two* men upon the road, carrying *each* of them a *heavy* burden, who were *equally* wearied with their journey, were both at the *same* distance from their home, and who were, in *all* respects, *equally* the objects of his pity, and if he should *assist* one, and *leave* the other to wrestle with his difficulty, when it was *equally* in his power, and as easy for him to assist them both, this would be an instance of *great partiality*, and an indication that it was not *true goodness*, but some other motive which excited to the action. The application is easy. Again,

It may be farther urged, that God is at liberty to dispense his favours *to whom*, and in *what manner* he pleases, and that it is not fit for his creatures to say, why? Or, what doest thou?

To which it may be answered, it is granted, that God is *at liberty* to dispense his favours arbitrarily, or, as he pleases, with regard to any *physical necessity* he is under to the contrary; and he is likewise *at liberty* to act thus, as he is *above* controul. But if he be a *wise* and *good* being, which *most certainly* he is, then he will *always* direct his actions by the *rules* of wisdom and goodness; and, consequently, it may be urged, that he *will not* dispense his favours *arbitrarily* and *partially*, as the objection supposes. Again,

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It may yet be farther urged, that God may give a revelation thus constituted for the *common good*, to one nation or people *only*, and lay it upon them, as their duty, to *publish* it to the rest; and so it may be given, not only *intentionally*, but *eventually* to *all*; in which case, as his kindness will be *universal*, so it clears him from *all* appearance of partiality.

To which it may be answered, that if God was a *perfect stranger* to mankind, then it might more easily be admitted, that he might *intend* a general good by such a revelation, and might leave it in the hands of a *few men* to make it so. But when we consider what *long experience* hath shewn mankind to be, how *apt* they are to betray the trust reposed in them, and, thereby, to *frustrate* the kind intentions of their Maker; how *liable* to corrupt whatever is put into their hands, to turn it to their *private* advantage, and to make it subservient to quite *contrary* purposes than what it was intended; and that no *threatnings* nor *promises* are *sufficient* to keep some men to their duty; and that *all this* is perfectly *well known* to God; when this is taken into the case, then the question is, whether it is not *unlikely* that God should intend a revelation for the *good* of *all*, and yet should leave it in the hands of a *few men* to make it so, seeing it is *equally* as easy for him to give it *universally*



to all, as to give it to one nation or people only? Add to this, the *opposition* that a revelation, which is given in this way, is *liable* to, and that it is *likely* to meet with, so that it may be a course of *many ages* before it makes its way thro' the world, if it does at all, and, consequently, the *greatest* part of mankind may *lose* the benefit of it. So that the question is, whether this does not *heighten* the improbability, that God would give a revelation designed, and constituted for a general good, in the way above mentioned? This, however, must be allowed, that when a revelation is given by God to men, it will be done in a way which is *consistent* with human liberty, and then it will be the subject of every man's *free* choice, whether he will receive the *benefits* intended by it, or not. But then this does not affect the case; the present question, not being whether man is to be *over-ruled*, but whether it is *likely* that such a wise and good being as God is, should give a revelation, and *intend* it for a general good to mankind, and yet should give it in *such* a way, as that it will be in the *power*, and at the *pleasure* of one, or a few men, to prevent *thousands* and *millions* of others from *sharing* in the benefits of it? But then,

To what has been returned, by way of answer, as above, it may be replied, that if a revelation's being given *partially* to some, and not *universally* to all, be a *good* argument  
*against*

*against* its being given by *God*, because that benevolence which disposed *God* to give it to *some*, would *equally* dispose him to give it universally to *all* in *like* circumstances; then this argument concludes as *strongly* against its being given by *any other* invisible being. For, as benevolence is supposed to be the *spring* of action in *both* cases, so that benevolence would *dispose* the benevolent agent to make his kindness *universal*, as well in *one case* as in the *other*, that is, whether the benevolent agent be *God*, or whether he be *some other* invisible being. And, if we may suppose some *secret* reason to take place, (which, if discovered, our understandings could not but *approve*,) which reason may be a *proper* motive to *some other* invisible agent to communicate his goodness to *some*, tho' not to *all*, in *like* circumstances, then that supposition may, with *equal* reason, be admitted with respect to *God*.

To this it may be answered, that if all invisible agents are *perfectly free* from all temptations, *misguided* affections, and from *every thing* that may mislead them in their conduct, which is the case with respect to *God*; then, indeed, what is urged above would be of *weight*; but we have no principle upon which *such* a presumption or supposition can be *fairly* grounded, and, therefore, the precedent argument *does not* conclude as *strongly* in *one case*, as in the *other*. Besides, the *ability* of a *virtuous* invisible agent, in  
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this case, may be *limited* and *bounded*, and, consequently, tho' it may be in the *power* of *such* an agent to serve *part* of mankind, yet it will not follow, that it is *equally* in his power to serve *all*, were he disposed so to do. Again,

With respect to the grand objection against the divinity of a revelation, mentioned above, *viz.* its being given *partially* to some, and not *universally* to all, it may be farther observed, supposing the body of mankind to be in such a *corrupt* and *degenerate* state, both as to their opinions, their affections and actions, as renders a revelation (which is fitly constituted to *reform* those abuses) *highly useful*, and, therefore, *extremely desirable* to mankind; and supposing a revelation which claims a *heavenly* character should be given, which is *excellently suited* to answer these purposes; and supposing *such effects* take place, and are offered in *favour* of the divinity of this revelation, of which it may *fairly* and *justly* be presumed that they *exceed* the bounds of human power, and, consequently, that they are produced by the agency of *some invisible* being, and that the power exercised, was subservient to the *present good* of mankind; and supposing this revelation be given *only* to some, and not to *all*, in *like* circumstances, the question would be, whether this *single* circumstance *against* the divinity of *such* a revelation, be of *less*, or *equal*, or *superior* weight,

weight, than *all* those other circumstances which are offered in *favour* of the divinity of that revelation? so that the force of all that has been offered on either side of the present question terminates in this, namely, whether this one circumstance *against* the divinity of a revelation (*viz.* its being given partially as aforesaid) or whether all the other circumstances which are supposed to concur in *favour* of the divinity of that revelation, I say, the question is, which of these ought in reason to determine our judgments either for, or against the divinity of that revelation? Again,

It may be farther observed, by way of answer to the forementioned objection, that by God's giving a revelation universally to all, must be meant either, *first*, his giving it to all, by applying immediately to the mind of every individual of our species, and thereby revealing to every individual the truths intended to be made known; or else, *secondly*, by applying immediately to the mind of some one, or more of our species, and revealing to him, or them, the truths intended to be made known, as aforesaid, and then applying mediately by him, or them to others, by requiring him, or them, to reveal or publish those truths to others, and them to others, and so on till that revelation is communicated to all; these being, I think, the only ways by which a revelation can be given universal-  
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ly to all, as aforesaid. As to the *first*, it must be granted, that such a particular divine application to the mind of each individual, as aforesaid, would be giving of a revelation universally to all; but then such a revelation would be foreign to our present enquiry, because the case of miracles, in our present view of them, would not come into the question. For as in that case, as every one would have the revelation at *first hand*, and no one would receive it from another; so no *credit* would be required to be given to one from another, with respect to it; and consequently, no *miracle* would be wanted to back, or support any one's credit on that account. So that if a revelation was given universally to all, by a divine application to the mind of *every* individual of our species, then the case of *miracles*, in our *present view* of them, *would not* come into the question. As to the *second* way of giving a revelation to all, *viz.* by God's applying *immediately* to the mind of some *one*, or *more* of our species, and revealing to him, or them, the *truths* intended to be made known; and then, applying *mediately* by *him*, or *them*, to *others*, by requiring him, or them, to *reveal* or *publish* those truths to others, and *them* to *others*, and so on till it be given *universally* to *all*; if this were the case, then, in the nature of the thing, the revelation must lie under *all* the difficulties and disadvantages before taken notice

tice of, *viz.* it must be then in the *power* of one man to prevent or hinder many others from *sharing* in the benefits intended by that revelation, and the like. For as man is a *free* being, so whatever trust is reposed in him, he is *liable* to abuse; and whatever offer is made to him, he is liable to *reject*, and to act in *opposition* to it; and this is the case of *all* our species. And therefore, if a divine revelation were given, as aforesaid, then it would be absurd to ask, *why* it is not given universally to all? seeing its being communicated to all, depends upon the *virtue* and *honesty* of all our species, and supposes, that all and every one appointed to *publish* this revelation would be *faithful* and *true* in executing that trust, and that all to whom it is published, would be so *honest* and *just*, as not to *oppose* it. But this is not to be *supposed*, because if *this* were the case (which surely in fact it is not) then the world would not stand in *need* of *such* a revelation, as we have now under consideration. So that the point at last turns upon this question, *viz.* which of those *two* ways of giving a revelation to the world would *best* and *most effectually* answer the purposes of such a revelation? whether by a divine application *immediately* to the mind of *every* individual of our species? or whether by a divine application *immediately* to some *one* or *more* of our species, and *mediately* by *him*, or *them*, to *others*, and by *them*

*them to others*, and so on? What difficulties and disadvantages are *liable* to attend the *latter* of these ways, and what *impositions* and *frauds* may be committed under the *pretext* of it, are *easy* to be discerned, because they have taken place in *fact*. But then, what difficulties and inconveniences may *attend* the *former* of these ways, are not so *easy* to be *guessed* at, except we form our judgments in the present case, upon what has attended some *pretensions* of this kind. Thus, the enthusiasm and madness, if I may so call it, which took place in the *last age*, and which introduced great disorder, was founded on a *persuasion*, or at least a *pretence* of an *immediate* divine application to the mind of *each* individual. Every one *thought*, or *pretended*, that he was *immediately taught of God*. So that supposing mankind at any time to be in *such* circumstances, as very much to *need* a divine revelation; and supposing God were *disposed* to give them one; then the question is, which of the *two* ways beforementioned would be *liable* to the *least* difficulties and inconveniences, and which of them would *best* answer the purpose of a *publick* or *general* good? I say, this is the present question; because we may be assured God will always make use of *such* ways and means, as will *best* answer the end proposed to be obtained. But as this question *cannot* well be answered, because we *are not* very good judges in the  
present

present case; so it may be urged, that this *takes off*, or at least very *much weakens* that objection against the divinity of a revelation, which arises from its *not* being given universally to all.

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## S E C T I O N   X I I .

**T**HUS I have represented, or taken a view of the case of miracles, and have introduced the various reasonings upon those questions with which the subject is concerned, and hereby have shewn what kind and degree of evidence arises from them, under the various circumstances which may attend them; and how far, and in what respect they are capable of proving a revelation to be divine. And in the course of this argument, I think, it plainly appears, that miracles under the *most advantageous* circumstances cannot, in the nature of the thing, afford *certain*, but only *probable* proof, that a revelation is divine.

The sum of the argument is this, *viz.* When the circumstances that attend the case afford a just foundation for presuming, that the facts in question *exceed* the bounds of human power; and consequently, there is just ground



ground to presume, that they were produced by the power of some *invisible* being; and likewise, when there are other circumstances which make it likely, that the miracles wrought were annexed to the *truth*, and not to a lie; and also, when there are such other circumstances attending the case as make it *more likely* and *probable*, that *God* is the agent in producing those effects, rather than *any other invisible* being; then miracles in *those* circumstances seem to afford *probable* proof, that the revelation they are brought to vouch for is *divine*. What those circumstances *are* which are judged to be a *just* foundation for such *likelihood* and *probability*, is shewn above; and likewise, what those circumstances *are* which seem to *perplex* the case.

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### SECTION XIII.

**A**ND as I have considered the case of miracles upon a supposition of the *truth* and *certainty* of the facts themselves; so surely it cannot be thought improper, if I remind my reader, that he ought carefully to examine the *grounds* upon which his *assent* to the truth of those facts is founded; because otherwise he is in *danger* of being *mised*.  
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For though there may be cases in which we may come to a *certainty* of the truth of those facts, and in many others to a *high degree* of probability; yet there may be cases *so circumstanced*, as may render those facts very *doubtful* and *uncertain*; and therefore, the *grounds* of our assent ought carefully to be *examined*, lest our *credulity* should mislead us.

Man is a creature not only *capable* of being imposed upon by *others*, but likewise of imposing upon *himself*. He can *imagine*, that he *sees* and *hears* what in reality he does not; and so of his *other senses*. And though our senses are the *only* proper judges of *sensible* effects, yet this is not *always* an *absolute security* against delusion; because sometimes the *imagination* leads the understanding, when we think it is led by the *senses*; and then we conclude, that some *sensible* effects have taken place, when in *reality* they have not. And this is the case not only when we are *asleep*, or in the *height* of a *fever*, or in the *depth* of melancholy; but *sometimes* when *neither* of these take place. When something that is *wonderful* and *surprising* strikes the imagination strongly, and when the mind is not apprized of its *own weakness*, and the *danger* it is in of being deluded in this way, and when *nothing interposes* which instantly shews, that it cannot be fact, but merely the product of imagination; then the imagination *sometimes*

times so far prevails as to mislead the judgment; and men become as certain (with regard to the persuasion of their own minds) of what is merely fictitious, as they are of those facts which are real and certain in themselves. And as men are thus capable of being misled, so they are the more strongly disposed to it, when religion is any way interested in the case. Religion awakens the passions, and engages them in its favour; and then we are more easily led to believe those facts to be true, which we wish to be so, than otherwise we should do. When religion is to be propagated, and men consider themselves as heavenly messengers, and as those who are engaged in the cause of God, this too often intoxicates their minds, and then they are disposed to, and (without great watchfulness upon themselves) are in danger of going groundlessly into the belief of those facts, which tend to advance, or strengthen the interest they are engaged in. This may sometimes be the case; and therefore, though honesty and integrity may secure us from imposing upon others, yet these are not always a security against our imposing upon ourselves. And,

As men are thus capable of misleading themselves, so sometimes, and under some circumstances, the delusion is catching. It is but to report to others, what we imagine we see and hear; and they instantly imagine, that they see and hear the same things. And thus

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it is when a nation is threatned with a *foreign* invasion, or when the peoples *fears* are any other ways alarmed with the expectation of war, if *one* man *imagines* that he *sees* armies fighting in the clouds, and if he *reports* it to others, then they are apt to imagine that *they see* the same; whereas if each of those who heard the report had been *separated* from that *company*, and those *fears*, they would not have imagined, that they had seen any such things; this, I say, may *sometimes* be the case. And though a variety of such facts, or supernatural effects may take place, the *truth* of which we may be *assured* of upon *good* grounds, and consequently, that we are not deceived by *others*, nor *ourselves*; yet there may be *many others* of which our *senses* may be supposed to be witnesses, which when they are *thoroughly* considered will appear to be very *uncertain*; and if they are brought as *evidences* to prove the *divinity* of a revelation, the proof arising from them must therefore be *doubtful* and *uncertain* also.

Thus stands the case with regard to *some* of those *facts* of which we ourselves are supposed to be witnesses. But if we are to take these, and some other facts, which may be considered as *miraculous*, upon the report of *others*, and if the story of them have passed through *several hands*, this must render *those facts more uncertain*. For tho' we may be assured of our *own* honesty and integrity  
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with regard to the point in hand, yet we cannot be alike assured of the *honesty* and *integrity* of *other* men. And,

Tho' it be a proper enquiry in such a case, *whether*, and *how far* the reporter's *present interest* is concerned, because if it is, then the credit of the report would be thereby *weakened*, as a man's present interest may become a *temptation* to him to *mislead* others for its sake; yet supposing the reporter has no present interest in view, this will not, in *all cases*, be a *just* foundation for relying *absolutely* on *some* mens integrity, because, notwithstanding this, they *may* deceive us. The *getting* and *preserving* worldly wealth, and the *securing* life, with its enjoyments, are not the *only* springs from which dissimulation and imposition may arise, seeing men have *other passions* which excite to action as *strongly*, and, perhaps, to persons of *some* tempers and constitutions, *more strongly* than these. The imaginary *glory* which arises from the consideration of being *heavenly* messengers, and the concern men are under to promote the cause of *God*, in which they think *themselves* engaged, are reasons sufficient to dispose *some* men to turn themselves into *every shape*, and to advance *any thing* that appears *necessary* to support that cause, even tho' it be *injurious* to their worldly interest. And,

Tho' it would, likewise, be a proper enquiry, *whether*, and *how far* the reporters

have shewn their *integrity* in *other instances*; for if it appears that they have *misled* people in *other cases*, then they are *less* to be relied upon in *this*; and if they have shewn their integrity in *many other instances*, then the grounds of confidence, in them, become so much the *stronger* in the *present case*; yet if integrity should appear to run thro' the general course of *some persons actions*, even *that* would not be a *just* ground for relying *absolutely* upon their *integrity* in all matters of *religion*, because, to some persons, religion *sanctifies* every action, and makes those facts appear *good*, which, in any *other case*, would appear to the *same persons exceedingly evil*. So that, tho' a *steady integrity* should appear to run thro' the *general* course of a man's actions, and tho' this would be a *proper ground* of confidence in a man in the affairs of life, yet it would not be a *like ground* of confidence in *some such men*, in the *case before us*. For when *some men* consider themselves as engaged in the cause of *God and religion*, this may lead them to use their endeavours to promote that cause, in *every way* in which they are *likely* to succeed, and then they are *liable*, and *disposed* to affirm and maintain whatever seems proper to *support* and *carry on* the cause in which they are religiously engaged, without regarding whether it be *strictly true*, or *not*, of which, surely, the world has furnished us with instances.

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And, therefore, this ought to be a *check* upon our *confidence* in the *present case*, and should prevent our running *hastily* into the belief of every fact, the report of which comes from persons whose *integrity* has appeared to run thro' the *general* course of their actions. And,

Tho' dissimulation and imposition may stand *condemned* in the judgment, and by the religious principles of such men, yet that is not always a *sufficient* ground of confidence, in the case before us. For when dissimulation, and imposition are made *subservient* to the purposes of *religion*, then *some* men are apt to see them in *another light*, call them by *another name*, and some way or other render the practice of them not only easy, but *commendable* to themselves. And as miracles are made subservient to the purposes aforesaid, so this is a *just* ground for us to act with *caution* when we admit them, and go into the *belief* of them, especially, if the story of them have passed thro' *several* hands, because *different* persons may have *different* motives to act from, and to *dispose* them to mislead mankind, of which, in the nature of the thing, we cannot be *very good* judges.

Besides, there are various circumstances, some of which *strengthen*, and others *weaken* the credit of such reports. As thus, the fact itself may be such as renders it more *easy*, or more *difficult* to detect a fraud, if there be  
any.

any. The *former* of these very much *strengthens*, and the *latter* very much *weakens* the *credit* of the report. For if it be a case in which a fraud is *easily* detected, then it becomes more *likely* that it *would* be detected, were there any such thing. But if it be a case in which it would be *difficult* to detect a fraud, then the grounds of *distrust* become so much the *stronger*, and, consequently, the grounds of *credit* become so much the *weaker*. Again, the fact may be performed in an age, and country *where*, and *when* miracles are in *reputation*, and people go *easily* into the belief of them; or, they may be performed at a time, and in a place *when*, and *where* miracles are in *disrepute*, and the belief of them is *not* easily admitted. The *former* of these *weakens*, and the *latter* *strengthens* the credit of such reports. For when miracles are in *repute*, and people go easily into the belief of them, then there is not a *like* disposition in the people to *examine* the case with that *care*, and *strictness*, as when the belief of miracles is *not* so easily and readily admitted, and, consequently, the *former* of these *weakens*, and the *latter* *strengthens* the credit of such reports. Again, the fact may be performed in the *open day-light*, and in the *face of society*, or it may be done in the *night*, or in a *corner*, or before *two* or *three* witnesses only. The *former* of these *strengthens*, and the *latter* *weakens* the *credit* of the report.

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For when a fact is done before a *multitude*, and at *such* a time and place as gives a *fair opportunity* of examining it *strictly*, then it may be presumed that *some* person or other would be *disposed* to do it, and this *strengthens* the *credit* of the report of such a fact. But if it be done at a *time*, or in a *place* which would render it *difficult* to examine the case *thoroughly*, or if it be performed before a *very small* number of witnesses, who, therefore, may be more *easily* misled, or corrupted than a *multitude* can be supposed to be, this very much *weakens* the *credit* of the report. Again, the fact may be performed before persons who are well *qualified* and *disposed* to examine it *strictly*; or before *weak* and *ignorant* people who are more *easily* misled and imposed upon; or before persons who, from *other* considerations, are *disposed* to *countenance* the report of it. The *former* of these *strengthens*, and the *latter* *weakens* the *credit* of such report. For if a fact be performed before persons who are *well qualified* and *disposed* to examine it *thoroughly*, then there is a *probability* that a fraud would be *detected*, if there were any. But if it be performed before *weak* and *ignorant* people, or before persons who, from *other* considerations, are *disposed* to *countenance* the report, then there is not the *same* likelihood that a fraud would be detected, and, consequently, the *credit* of the report, under *such* circumstances,

stances, would be so much the *weaker*. Again,

If those facts are entered upon *record*, and if those records are to be *evidences* of the *truth* of those facts, in *future times*, and to *posterity*, then the credit of such records may be either *stronger*, or *weaker*, according to the *various* and *different circumstances* which may attend them. As thus, the facts may be entered upon record at the *time* of performance, and those records may be made *so* publick at the *time* and *place* of action, as may not only *dispose*, but render it very *easy* for inquisitive persons who live upon the spot, to examine the case *thoroughly*, by examining both the *record*, and the *evidences* of the facts which are to support the *credit* of that record; or the facts may be entered upon record, *ten*, or *twenty*, or *thirty* years after performance, and may be made publick in places *far distant* from the place of action, or be kept as a *sacred treasure* in the hands of *believers*. The *former* of these very much *strengthens*, and the *latter* very much *weakens* the *credit* of such records. For with respect to the *former* circumstances, there is a fair *occasion*, and an *opportunity* offered by them, to every person who lives *near* the place of action, and who may, therefore, (without much *trouble* or *inconvenience* to themselves) examine the case with the *utmost strictness*; and this renders it *more likely* that a fraud  
would

could be detected, if there were any, and, consequently, *those* circumstances very much *strengthen* the *credit* of such records. But if the facts are entered upon record *ten*, or *twenty*, or *thirty* years after the performance, and are made publick at places *far distant* from the place of action, or if they are kept as a *secret treasure* in the hands of *believers*, as this would render a strict and proper scrutiny into the case exceeding *difficult*, if not *impossible*; so it would not only *discourage*, but effectually *hinder* all attempts of this kind; and consequently, a fraud under *such* circumstances would not *easily* be *detected*; and this must render the *credit* of such records so much the *weaker*. Constant experience shews how *hard* and *difficult* a thing it is to come at the *truth* of facts performed but *yesterday*, and in the *next parish*; and this difficulty of course must *increase* in proportion to the *distance* of time and place the facts may be performed in, or of their being *entered* upon *record*, or the *making* those records *publick*; and other circumstances may intervene, which may *increase* that *difficulty*. Besides, who is there that would take the *pains* of examining into the *truth* of a fact performed *ten*, or *twenty* years before, and an *hundred* or two *hundred* miles distant from him? The *troublesomeness* of the work, and the *little likelihood* of obtaining a *rational* satisfaction, are surely sufficient *bars* to *such* an undertaking. These are

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*circumstances* (and possibly there may be *many* others) which either *strengthen* or *weaken* the *credit* of such reports and records as we have now under consideration.

Miracles, *at a distance*, more especially when they stand related to the present question, are things of which, in some instances at least, it is difficult to attain to a high degree of probability, much more to any certainty, with regard to them; that is, with respect to the truth of the facts themselves. For, tho' sometimes mens faith runs *high* in this particular, yet that does not always arise from, nor bear a proportion to the *strength* and *clearness* of the evidence upon which such faith is founded; the prejudices that arise from education, preconceived opinions, and the like, having so prevailing an influence upon the understandings of men, as that they generally govern their judgments in this particular; and men are *believers*, or *infidels*, just as their prejudices lead them to be one, or the other of these. And, tho' the *circumstances* that attend miracles ought in some measure to be our guide, yet, alas! experience shews, that the very same circumstances, at least they are the same, for any thing that appears to the contrary, at different times, and to different persons, do not become a like foundation for credit, or the contrary, with respect to them. And here, I think, it may not be amiss to acquaint my readers with



a miracle, or fact, which is said to have taken place in our *own times*, viz. in the month of *August*, 1703; which fact was declared, and attested by *John Cavalier* of *Sauve*, on *January* 31, 1706, at *London*; and which declaration was printed and published the same year, or the year following, as it is contained in *Mr. Lacy's* book, entitled, *A Cry from the Desert: Or, Testimonials of the miraculous Things lately come to pass in the Sevens, verified upon Oath, and by other Proofs*. Take the relation in *Mr. Cavalier's* own words, pages 49, 50, 51, 52. of the forementioned book. “ Our leader, *Mr. Cavalier* my cousin, called an assembly at the “ *Tile-kilns* of *Cannes*, near *Serignau*, in the “ month of *August*, 1703. Our troop was “ between five and six hundred men, and “ there were doubtless as many more of both “ sexes, who came from the towns and villages adjoining, to assist in religious exercises, that Lord's day. After divers exhortations, lectures, and psalms sung, brother “ *Clary*, who had received admirable gifts “ (and whose frequent revelations, with those “ of *Mr. Cavalier*, were the ordinary directions of our troop) was seized with extasy “ in the midst of the assembly, his bodily agitations being so great, as to affect the “ audience very much. The beginning of “ his sermon he said several things relating “ to the dangers to which the assemblies of “ the faithful were ordinarily exposed, but  
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“ that God watched over them, and was  
 “ their guard. His agitations augmenting,  
 “ the spirit made him say these words, or to  
 “ this effect; *I acquaint thee, my child, there*  
 “ *are two men in this assembly, who are come*  
 “ *only to betray you, they are sent by the enemy*  
 “ *to spy what passes among you, and to give*  
 “ *an account thereof to those who sent them;*  
 “ *but I say unto thee, I will have them disco-*  
 “ *vered, and thou thyself shalt lay hands upon*  
 “ *them.* We were all attentive to what he  
 “ had said, and immediately *Clary*, the agi-  
 “ tations of his head and breast continuing,  
 “ walked towards one of the traitors (I call  
 “ them so, because they professed our reli-  
 “ gion,) and laid hand upon the man’s arm.  
 “ *Mr. Cavalier* seeing this, commanded the  
 “ soldiery to their arms, and to surround the  
 “ assembly so, that no one might escape. The  
 “ other spy, who stood at a distance, made  
 “ his way through the croud immediately,  
 “ and came, with his comrade, to fling him-  
 “ self at the feet of *Mr. Cavalier*, confessing  
 “ the fault, and begging pardon of God,  
 “ and of the assembly. Both of them al-  
 “ ledged, that extream poverty had brought  
 “ them to yield to the temptation, but said,  
 “ they repented it bitterly, and both of them  
 “ promised, by the grace of God, to be  
 “ faithful for the future, if their lives were  
 “ spared. *Mr. Cavalier*, however, ordered  
 “ them to be bound, and put in ward.

“ After

“ After this, the inspiration of *Clary* con-  
 “ tinuing, with violent agitations, he cried  
 “ out aloud, that many of the audience  
 “ murmured within themselves, at what was  
 “ done, as if the readiness and freedom  
 “ wherewith the accused persons had con-  
 “ fessed, was a sign of an understanding be-  
 “ twixt *Clary* and them, in order to counter-  
 “ feit a miracle. In that instant, said the  
 “ spirit by *Clary*, *O people of little faith, do*  
 “ *ye still doubt of my power among you, when*  
 “ *I have made you see so many wonders of it?*  
 “ *I command a fire immediately to be made,*  
 “ *and I say to thee, my child, I will that thou*  
 “ *put thyself into the midst of the flames, and*  
 “ *they shall have no power to hurt thee, &c.*  
 “ At these words, there was a shriek among  
 “ the people, of those especially who had  
 “ murmured, and who having not served in  
 “ arms had not so much faith as we; all  
 “ these cried out together, confessing their  
 “ distrust, and craving pardon, saying, *Lord,*  
 “ *of thy mercy withdraw this testimony of fire!*  
 “ *we find that thou art he which knows the*  
 “ *hearts;* but *Clary* with redoubling agita-  
 “ tions insisted, it should be done. Mr. *Ca-*  
 “ *valier* ordered wood to be got immediately  
 “ for a pile; and as there was at hand tile-  
 “ kilns, they found in a moment a deal of  
 “ brush-wood, and dry, combustible stuff;  
 “ this small wood, mixed with large sticks,  
 “ was heaped up in the midst of the congre-  
 “ gation,

gation, on a sinking ground, so that the people round were above it.

*Clary*, who had upon him a white streight frock, being a bricklayer by trade, put himself upon the top of that pile of wood, streight upright, with his hands joined and lifted above his head; he was still in his extasy, or agitations, and continued to speak in the flames. I have been told by several what his discourse then was, for my part, I could not understand him. I have heard that *Clary* put fire to it himself, and that the fire mounted in an instant; but I did not observe that particular, though I was very near. The troop under arms encompassed quite the assembly, which was almost all upon the knee in prayer and tears, making a circle round the fire. The wife of *Clary* stood by, with her father and two sisters, and several of his own kindred, I cannot be positive to name them. Every one in the assembly might see him stand surrounded with flames, that rose much above his head. Those that had gathered the wood pushed back the sticks as they happened to start from the fire, that all might be consumed. He did not come out of the fire till the wood was quite spent, and there was no more flame. The spirit was still upon him, and though he continued at least



“ least a quarter of an hour (as far as I am  
 “ able to compute) in the flames; yet he  
 “ came forth with hiccoughs and heavings of  
 “ the breast upon him.

“ Mr. *Cavalier* concluded the assembly  
 “ with a prayer aloud, offering up praises  
 “ unto God, for that great miracle, which  
 “ he had vouchsafed to perform, for the  
 “ strengthning the faith of his servants. I  
 “ was one of the first who embraced our  
 “ precious brother *Clary*; I took notice of  
 “ his clothes and hair, which the flames so  
 “ much respected also, that no mark could  
 “ be discerned of fire upon them. His wife  
 “ and kindred were in transports of joy, and  
 “ the congregation dispersed, because the  
 “ night drew on, every one in a triumph of  
 “ praising and blessing God. I saw and  
 “ heard all these things. Mr. *Cavalier* then  
 “ called for the *two* men, that were convict-  
 “ ed and put in hold; he was of opinion  
 “ with those about him, to shew them mer-  
 “ cy, because they seemed sincerely penitent,  
 “ and had really executed nothing; so that  
 “ the *two* fellows being exhorted to future  
 “ fidelity, were set at liberty.”

Here we have a relation of a fact which is  
 very uncommon, and of an extraordinary  
 nature, viz. a man who stood upon a pile of  
 wood, when set on fire, and remaining upon it  
 till it was consumed, without receiving any  
 harm thereby. This was done so lately, as  
 to

to be within the compass of the last *forty* years; and likewise so near us, as in the neighbouring kingdom of *France*. This fact is of such a nature, as seems to be above, and therefore, not the produce of *juggle* or *sleight of hand*. This fact, or miracle, was performed before a great number of *witnesses*, by computation not less than *one thousand*. These witnesses were persons who suffered *persecution* for the sake of their religion; persons who were eminent for their *great piety*, or at least for their being frequent in those exercises which are made the outward signs and tokens of it; persons of reputed *honesty* and *integrity*, and who could not possibly have any *worldly advantages* in view to dispose them to engage in, or to countenance a *fraud*, as the government they lived under was very much against them, and greatly opposed that *new dispensation* they were believers in, and that *new ministry* they attended upon. And, as this fact or miracle took place, or at least is said to have taken place in *our own time*, and in *our neighbourhood* (*France* being put in competition with more distant countries) and before a *great number of witnesses*, who were well qualified to discern and judge of its reality; and, for any thing that appears to the contrary, were *disposed* to testify the *truth* of what they knew; so it was *declared*, and *attested*, and entered upon *record*, and that record was *published* within *four* years after

after the fact, which publication must have been much more *extensive* and *general* than any ancient publication of facts could be before the use of printing took place, the book in which the history of this fact is contained, having come to a *second* edition in the year 1707.

Now, though all those circumstances concur *in favour* of the miracle abovementioned, by which it may seem that a *fraud* could have been *more easily detected* in this case, if there was any, than in many other cases of like kind; yet who is there that thinks he has *proper* and *sufficient ground* to justify his giving credit to this fact, supposing it has, or should come within his notice? or that can shew *sufficient reason* why he should not? and, I think, it may be answered, perhaps, not *one in ten*, amidst the multitude of believers that are now in the world. The miracle referred to was wrought, or supposed to be wrought, in favour of a *new dispensation*, and a *new ministry* introduced to propagate it; and supposing it to have been ever so well attested, yet it would have been under a disadvantage, as the generality of believers were so strongly prejudiced in favour of *old miracles*, as not to admit of *any new*; and this will be the case of all *new dispensations*, till they get the better of those prejudices. If the new dispensation referred to, and the new ministry introduced to propagate it, *viz.* the *modern*

N *prophets,*

*prophets*, as they are called, had gained the ascendant over those prejudices which lay against them, and had succeeded by generally prevailing in the world; then, no doubt, the forementioned fact would have been admitted as *unquestionably true*, by all who believed in this new dispensation; and every circumstance relating to this miracle would have been *introduced*, and *imbellished*, in order to support its credit; but whereas the dispensation and ministry referred to, have not generally prevailed, but seem rather to sink and die away; so the very *knowledge* of the forementioned miracle seems likewise to die away with them.

Perhaps, it may be said, that though according to the above relation the fact beforementioned was seen by a *multitude* of *spectators*; yet that circumstance, *viz.* its being *seen by many*, rests wholly upon the authority of Mr. *Cavalier's testimony*, which may seem at least to weaken its credit. For, as the great number of witnesses referred to, have not given *any testimony* concerning this fact, at least no such thing has come to our knowledge; so this renders the case the same to us as if those persons had not been witnesses; witnesses without a testimony being so many mutes, and are altogether the same with regard to this, or any other fact, as if they had not been witnesses at all. And though Mr. *Cavalier* has declared, that



this fact was seen by a *multitude* of *persons*; yet as this is grounded upon his *single testimony*, so the *credit* of the *whole* rests upon his *single testimony* also, and is the same to us as if he only had been witness to this fact.

To which it may be replied, that this is the case of *many other miracles*, which, notwithstanding, are deemed unquestionably true; that is, there are other facts, or miracles, whose truth are not generally doubted of, said to be done before *many witnesses*; which circumstance, *viz.* their having been performed before many witnesses, we have no other authority for, than the bare *testimony* of the *historian*, who, perhaps, may not have been a witness to those facts himself; and therefore, if this circumstance, *viz.* its having been seen by many, is of little or no weight in the present case; then, by parity of reason, it must be of little or no weight in other cases under the same circumstance. Besides, the forementioned fact has been attested, not only by Mr. *Cavalier*, but Mr. *Fage* has also declared the same, as being an eye-witness to it. And Mr. *Marion* seems likewise to refer to this fact, whose words are as followeth.

“ I am satisfied, that as God suppressed,  
 “ when he pleased, the power of flames,  
 “ and did other like miracles among us; so  
 “ he damped the force of musket-balls, that  
 “ they sometimes dropped harmless, and as  
 “ rebounding from them, whom God would

“ be a shield to.” See *A Cry from the Desert*, page 94.

When men become *greatly prejudiced* in favour of, or against any fact, or miracle, they become disposed thereby to see in a favourable light, or the contrary, every thing that stands related to it; and when such prejudice becomes general, then what is offered in favour of, or against such fact, or miracle, meets with general acceptance, or general dislike, consonant to such prejudice, whether the argument be of weight, or not. An instance of this kind, I think, we have in a book, intitled, *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ*; which book met with a general acceptance; whereas, were this trial to be fairly tried, it might, perhaps, appear not to be altogether worthy of it: I mean, not as it stands related to Mr. *Woolston*, and his fictitious correspondent the *Jewish Rabbi*, but as it stands related to its *title-page*, viz. *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ*; in which view of the case, I beg leave to observe, that

To *try* the witnesses to any fact, or miracle, so as that the *proper purpose* of such a trial may be effectually answered by it, is, I think, to make such a fair and thorough examination of the case, as may enable the reader to form a *true judgment* whether the evidences given in afford a *proper foundation* for *credit* with respect to the *fact* those witnesses are brought to vouch for. And in  
such

such a trial, I think, there are *three* things which are chiefly to be enquired into; namely, *first*, the testimonies of those witnesses; *secondly*, their ability to know the truth of what they testified; and, *thirdly*, whether there be sufficient ground for presuming that they would, or did testify the truth of what they knew. I suppose it will not be hard nor difficult for my readers to understand what I mean by the *two* last of these enquiries, and therefore, I shall not take upon me to explain them, but shall pass them by, and shall only explain myself upon the *first*, and shew what I mean by trying the testimonies of those witnesses.

This article of enquiry, I think, implies *two* things, *viz.* *first*, the producing the testimonies of those witnesses in the words of the *witnesses themselves*, and not in the words of an *artful commentator*. As thus; if *Simon*, and *Andrew*, and *Philip*, are to be considered as *witnesses* of the resurrection of Christ, and if these witnesses are to be *tried*, then, upon such trial, the testimony of *Simon* must be produced in the words of *Simon* himself, and the testimony of *Andrew* in the words of *Andrew* himself, and the testimony of *Philip* in the words of *Philip* himself, and not in the words of another. This, I say, must be done, because the case requires that it should. It is quite ridiculous to pretend to try a witness, without producing  
the

the testimony of that witness; seeing a witness without a testimony, is like a body without a soul, that is, it is *dead* and *useless*. And to produce the testimony of any witness, not in the words of the witness himself, but in the words of another, who takes upon him to speak the witnesses sense in his own (*viz.* the speaker's) words, this, I think, is *soul practising*, and it is the same as if no testimony had been produced at all. The several testimonies of the witnesses being thus produced in the words of the witnesses themselves, the other branch of this *first* article of enquiry is, whether those witnesses *agree* in their *testimonies*; and also, whether they are *plain*, and *clear*, and *express*, and *full*, with respect to the question in debate; or whether they have expressed themselves *weakly*, or *darkly*, or *doubtfully* upon the point.

And, if any *material failure* appears, with respect to the *first* grand article of enquiry, then the other *two* articles become of less importance. As thus; it will not be of much use to enquire, whether *Simon*, and *Andrew*, and *Philip* were *well qualified* to know the particular fact of *Christ's resurrection*; or whether we have just ground for presuming that they would *testify* the *truth* of what they knew concerning it; when, either, they have not given *any testimonies* concerning that fact, or when such testimonies are *not produced*, or when the testimonies produced are not



not in the words of the *witnesses themselves*, or when those testimonies *disagree* in circumstances that are material, or when those witnesses have expressed themselves *weakly*, or *darkly*, or *doubtfully* upon the question, in these cases all farther enquiry seems to be but of little use.

The *three* forementioned articles of enquiry, I think, must of necessity take place, in *trying* the witnesses to any fact, if the *proper purpose* of such a trial is to be effectually answered thereby. For, though I do not pretend to understand forms of law, nor methods of proceeding in courts of judicature, yet this, I think, I may venture to say, that if the witnesses to a fact are to be *tried*, in order that a *true judgment* may be formed, whether the evidences they have given afford a proper foundation for credit, with respect to the fact they are brought to vouch for; then the *three* forementioned articles of enquiry ought to be plainly, fairly, and fully discussed, in order to answer that purpose; because a material defect in either of these, will disappoint that end. Indeed, if other purposes are to be answered, then other measures are to be taken. The use I would make of this, is, to lead my readers to *care* and *attention* in what they read, and not to follow the common cry, lest they should be misled thereby.

Possibly

Possibly it may be urged, that miracles stand upon as good a foot of credibility as any other facts of which our publick histories are composed.

To which it may be answered, that this may be the case in *some instances*, that is, where the circumstances are alike; but in *other instances*, where the circumstances are not alike, it may be quite otherwise. The credibility of facts may be *greater*, or *less*, from the different circumstances that attend them, as I have already observed; and *different* facts may have *different* foundations for credit, tho' related in the same history. That there was such a person as *Constantine the Great*, is considered as a matter of fact; and that *he*, and his *soldiers*, saw the *figure of a cross* in the heavens, is likewise considered as a matter of fact; but then the latter of those facts does not stand upon a like foot of credibility with the former, supposing them both to be related in the same history, there being a variety of circumstances which afford a proper foundation for credit with respect to the former, whereas those circumstances are wanting with regard to the latter; and therefore, there is not a like foundation for credit with respect to it, even tho' *Constantine* and *all his army* had become *vouchers* in the case. Christianity was then *struggling* with, and lifting up its head *above* Paganism in the *Roman empire*; and *Constantine*, and his soldiers, considered themselves

selves as engaged in the *cause* of God, and fighting under the *banner* of their *heavenly captain*; and as their success naturally *intoxicated* their minds, by giving *too great* a briskness to their spirits, so this *prepared* and *disposed* them to *imagine* that they saw and heard any thing *prodigious* that was started, if it appeared to *favour* their cause. Again,

It may be urged, that if the proof arising from miracles, in any instance or case, is *as good* as the nature of the thing will admit; then it is very *unreasonable*, in any such instance or case, to require *better* proof than the nature of the thing will allow, and that in a case of *difficulty*, a wise man would not run any *hazard*, but would always choose the *safer* side.

To this it may be answered, it is *true* that *such* a demand would be very *unreasonable*, but then it is *alike unreasonable*, in any case, to require *assent* where there is *no* proof, or to require a *stronger* assent than *properly* arises from the evidence; so that if it be unreasonable on *one side* to demand *certain* proof, in a case where, in the nature of the thing, it *cannot* be given, then it must be alike unreasonable, on the *other side*, to demand an *absolute* assent where *that* proof is wanting. And, as this, and every other question, ought to be examined with the utmost *fairness*, so, surely, every man ought, in reason, to *submit* to evidence, and to allow the *force* of every argument,

gument, whether the proof arising from it be *certain*, or only *probable*; and whether *that* probability be *greater*, or *less*; and whether it be *for*, or *against* the question in debate. But then, if a man acts *honestly* and *uprightly*, in this case, he cannot, in reason, be supposed to run any *hazard*, as to the *favour* of God, and his *safety* in another world; because, to admit *such* a supposition, would be to paint out God in the *worst* of colours, and to represent him as acting a most *unrighteous* part by his creatures. For if it is *right* and *fit* to give our assent, where *proper* evidence appears, then it must, in the nature of the thing, be *equally* as *fit* to *with-hold* our assent, where that evidence is *wanting*. And on the other side, if it is *unfit* to *with-hold* our assent when *proper* evidence takes place, then it must, in the nature of the thing, be *equally* as *unfit* to give our assent, where there is no *such* evidence, or to give a *stronger* assent than *naturally* arises from the evidence. So that we cannot suppose any *hazard* to be run in this case, with respect to the *favour* of God, and our *future* safety, without supposing God to act a part which is most *unreasonable* and *disingenuous*.

In a tract which I formerly published, entitled, *The Case of Abraham, with regard to his offering up Isaac in sacrifice, re-examined*, I expressed myself in the following words.  
 “ I have but just touched upon the case of  
 “ *miracles,*



“ *miracles*, because, possibly, some time or other I may treat of that subject more at large.” This *hint* raised an expectation in my readers, that I would take an opportunity for the offering my thoughts to the world on *that subject*, and it likewise has given occasion for my being several times called upon with respect to it; which expectation, I hope, I have now fully satisfied, by my publication of this discourse. Nevertheless, it is not unlikely but that our present defenders of Christianity, *viz.* the *Stebbings* \* and the *Horlers* of the age, may find out something or other in this discourse, (like as in my book, intitled, *The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*,) to ground the imputations of *Heathenism* and *Atheism* upon. Tho’ I readily acknowledge, it was not at all strange to me to find that my neighbour, the reverend Mr. *Horler*, should, out of the abundance of his *witticisms*, present the world with the following narrative, *viz.* that I have passed from *Arianism* to *Socinianism*, and from *Socinianism* to *Deism*, and having left *Deism*, I have removed myself into a very remote part of the universe, and have taken up my *head quarters* at the infamous town of *Atheism*. This, according to Mr. *Horler*, has been the course of my travels, if I may be allowed to use the simile;

O 2

tude;

\* See Dr. *Stebbing*’s visitation charge to the clergy of the archdeaconry of *Wilts*; and Mr. *Horler*’s sermon preached before the *Wiltshire* society at *Bristol*.

tude; and, were I to make another, and a farther remove, then, surely, the Lord himself would not know where I should stop. However, the forementioned relation must be allowed to be a most curious piece of history, which is worthy to be transmitted to posterity, and which, no doubt, will merit, for the *wanton historian*, a garnished stall in one or other of the cathedrals. And, as to the reverend Dr. *Stebbing*, I have this to observe, that if he had thought I had offered any thing to the world which would not *bear* being *reasoned* upon, he was welcome to *examine* it, and to have *confuted* it, had it been in his power; but for him to come *slily behind me*, with his *back-stroke*, with his imputation of *Heathenism*, this, I think, was acting out of character, as a man of understanding. Heathens, in the estimation of the multitude, are the *most abject* of our species; see a man *sunk the lowest* in his understanding and behaviour, and he is presently characterized by the term *Heathen*, yea, he is a *mere Heathen*.

The reason why I mention this here, is, because a *very great man* has been pleased to say of me, that I am come to *personal reflexions*, with respect to Dr. *Stebbing*, and this, I apprehend, was given as a reason why Dr. *Stebbing* would have no more to say upon the subject. And here I beg leave to observe, that I have gone no farther into personal reflexions,

flexions, than I was *naturally*, and almost *unavoidably* led by the subject before me. Thus, for example. Tho' Dr. *Stebbing* had complained to the publick of Mr. *Foster's* ill usage, in making him a *mere Turk*, yet he made no scruple of using me in the *same* way, by making me a *mere Heathen*. And, as the doing as one would be done by, is a *heathenish*, as well as a *christian maxim*, so from hence I was naturally led to observe, that its being such, (*viz.* a rule of action to Heathens) might, perhaps, set it *below* Dr. *Stebbing's* notice, seeing Heathenism is *very low* in his estimation. Again, if selling all, and giving it to the poor, be, according to Dr. *Stebbing*, necessary to constitute a *disciple of Christ*, then, surely, it was very natural for me to observe, that, in this particular, Dr. *Stebbing's* conduct, as *Christ's disciple*, is *very preposterous*, as the many church preferments he has got in his possession, and continues to hold, do plainly demonstrate. Again, I observed, that the characters of Infidel, Deist, Heathen, &c. may, with as *much justness* and *propriety*, be fixed upon *other persons* as upon *me*, whom yet, Dr. *Stebbing* would not chuse to treat in this way; and this, I acknowledge, was charging the Dr. with *partiality*, but then, this charge I was *naturally* led into, from the subject I was treating of. For, as I then had in view, and just after refered to a *sermon* of the *bishop of Salisbury's*

Salisbury's, (who is Dr. *Stebbing's* great friend and benefactor) in which \* sermon the bishop has asserted, *that Christianity is as old as the creation, and that the gospel is a republication of the law of nature*, which, according to Dr. *Stebbing*, is *rank Heathenism*, and is the very title of *Tindal's book*, even that book which has made so great a noise in the world, and has stirred up the wrath and indignation of our sons of thunder, and has led them to persecute its author with hard names, and terms of reproach, both living and dead; I say, as the bishop of *Salisbury* had thus plainly and publicly expressed himself, so for Dr. *Stebbing* to pass over, in silence, such an old offender, if it may be called an offence, and to single out me to fix the odium of *Heathenism*, &c. upon, this was partiality with a witness; and this reflexion I was thus naturally led into from the subject I had then in hand. However, Dr. *Stebbing* has made good an old proverb, *viz.* that one man may with more safety steal a horse, than another may look over a hedge. The bishop of *Salisbury* may take the liberty to say that *white* is *white* without incurring any censure; and were his lordship to say that *white* is *black*, (tho' this supposition is not to be admitted,) no doubt but it would be overlooked; where-  
as,

\* See a sermon preached by Dr. *Sherlocke*, now lord bishop of *Salisbury*, at *Bow-Church*, *London*, on the 17th of *Feb.* 1715.



as, if I take the liberty to say that *white* is *white*, I must be stigmatized with the characters of *Infidel*, *Heathen*, &c. Thus much for that great man's remark I now refer to, namely, that I am come to *personal reflexions*, which, I presume, are those I have mentioned, else I do not know what such a charge can be grounded upon.

To conclude, I observe, that as I have, in the precedent discourse, treated the subject under consideration with *plainness*, *fairness*, and *freedom*, so I have done it with this view, *viz.* that the *cause* of *truth* might be served thereby, whether it shall be on this, or that side of any question there treated of. Nevertheless, what I have offered, must be submitted to the judgment of my readers.

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## APPENDIX,

An Enquiry into this Question, *viz.*

Whether the Doctrines of the future Existence of Men, and a future Retribution, were plainly taught by *Moses* and the Prophets.

**I** Do not here take upon me to support either the affirmative, or the negative side of this question; but only to shew, that our Lord Jesus Christ has declared for the former.

It is observed, by the writer of the *Acts of the Apostles*, that the *Sadducees* said there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the *Pharisees* confess both, as in *Acts* xxiii. 8. These *Sadducees* thought they had put a very  
Puzzling

puzzling case to our Lord, by observing, that there was a woman who had *seven husbands*, and by querying whose wife she should be at the resurrection, seeing they all had her, as in *Mark xii. 18—23*. And *Jesus answering, said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God?* as at *ver. 24*. In this answer our Lord plainly supposes, that the doctrine of the resurrection, or at least of mens future existence, was taught in the *scriptures*, and that the *Sadducees* ignorance of the scriptures was, in part, the ground of their error in this particular. He likewise referred them to a passage in the writings of *Moses*, in which the doctrine was taught which these *Sadducees* denied (as at *verses 26, 27*.) And as touching the dead that they rise, have ye not read in the book of *Moses*, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; ye therefore do greatly err.* Here, I think, it is most apparent, that in the opinion, and according to the testimony of *Jesus Christ*, the *Jews* were taught the doctrine of the resurrection, or at least of mens future existence (which, perhaps, with them was the same thing) in the writings of *Moses*. Yea, according to *St. Luke* (as in *Luke xx. 37, 38*.) our Lord saith, that this doctrine was taught by *Moses himself*.  
Now



Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him.

But farther, in *Luke xvi. 18*, to the end of the chapter, our Lord gives the following relation, or parable. *There was a certain rich man, which was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, and desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: and he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot, neither can they pass*

*to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I therefore pray thee, father, that thou wilt send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent\*. And he said unto them, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded tho' one rose from the dead.*

In this parable there are several things which our Lord took an occasion to acquaint his followers with, such as that there will be another life after this, in which good men will be happy, and bad men miserable. For tho' the rich man is not said to be a bad man, nor is *Lazarus* said to be a good man; yet this is plainly supposed, taking all the other parts

\* It is a doctrine usually taught by Christians, that the damned in hell are so intirely given up to sin and wickedness, that nothing but malice against God, and their fellow-creatures, and other vile affections take place in them: whereas, in this parable, the rich man in hell is represented as having great pity and tenderness for his brethren upon earth, and that he used his utmost endeavour to prevent their falling into the same condemnation with himself; which, surely, demonstrate great goodness to take place in him. And admitting this to be but a parable; yet, I think, what is related in it, with regard to this matter, is of much more weight than the opposite popular opinion, which has nothing in nature or reason to support it.

parts of the parable into the case. For when the rich man renewed his request, with regard to his five brethren, or rather reasoned with *Abraham* upon his denying it, he urged this reason for it, *viz.* that if one went unto them from the dead, they would *repent*; which supposes that those who suffer misery in another world are *bad men*, and that *repentance in this life*, is the way to *escape that misery*; both of which, I think, imply that they are *good men*, who will be happy in another world.

Again, our Lord not only acquainted his hearers by this parable, that there would be a future state of existence to men, and a future retribution; but also, that those doctrines were plainly and clearly taught by *Moses* and the *prophets*. This, I think, is most apparent from the *reason* which is given, why *Lazarus* should not be sent from the dead, to give warning to the rich man's five brethren, lest they also fall under the same condemnation with him. The kind office, which the rich man desired that *Lazarus* would perform to his brethren, was plainly this, *viz.* to acquaint them, that there was most certainly a life to come, in which good men will be happy, and bad men miserable, that so those men might be prevailed upon by it to repent, and amend their ways, and thereby escape that misery. But this request was denied, for this reason, *viz.* because those

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*very things* were *taught them* by *Moses* and the *prophets*; they have *Moses* and the *prophets*, let them *hear them*. The question here is, what those men were to *hear* and *learn* from *Moses* and the *prophets*; and the answer is obvious, if the reason assigned why *Lazarus* should not be sent from the dead be *pertinent*, and to the *purpose*, *viz.* they were to *hear* and *learn those very things* which *Lazarus* was to inform them of, and which, if attended to, would be sufficient for their *conviction*. This, I say, must be the case, if the reason beforementioned be *pertinent*, and to the *purpose*. *Moses* and the *prophets* must have *taught plainly and clearly* what this *messenger* from the dead was to have acquainted the rich man's friends of, otherwise the reason urged against the sending such a messenger would have been *idle* and *trifling*. This is still more evident from *Abraham's farther reasoning* upon the case. For, when the rich man urged, that if one went from the dead they would repent, *Abraham* replied, that if they would not hear, would not attend to what was said to them by *Moses* and the *prophets*, *neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*; which plainly supposes, that what *Moses* and the *prophets* had *taught*, was as *plain and evident*, and as *proper a foundation for conviction*, as any thing that could be said by a messenger from the dead. They have *Moses* and the *prophets*,

*let them bear them; for if they bear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

From what I have observed, I think, it fully appears, that our Lord has *declared himself* to be on the *affirmative side* of the forementioned question. For to suppose that he would put *such a reason* into the mouth of *Abraham*, against his sending *Lazarus* from the dead, which reason *he knew* to be *false in fact*, I think, is by no means to be admitted. And from hence, I think, one, or other of these *three* conclusions will unavoidably follow, namely, either,

First, That those doctrines, *viz.* that there will be a future state of existence to men, and a future retribution, were plainly and clearly taught by *Moses* and the *prophets*, as our Lord hath maintained. Or else,

Secondly, That our Lord Jesus Christ did not rightly and truly understand *Moses* and the prophets touching these matters. Or else,

Thirdly, That there is, or was another *Moses* and the prophets, which our Lord referred to, who had taught those doctrines plainly and clearly; which other *Moses* and the prophets we are not acquainted with.

I say, I think, that one or other of these conclusions must of necessity follow from the premises, or principles before laid down; and therefore, I beg leave humbly to offer it to  
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the consideration of the reverend Dr. *Warberton*, and all others that particularly interest themselves in the forementioned question; presuming, that one or other of them will clear up this point.

*F I N I S.*

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